QUEEN MARGOT

H·NOEL·WILLIAMS

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QUEEN MARGOT

WIFE OF HENRY OF NAVARRE

MARGUERITE DE FRANCE
PREMIERE FEMME DU
ROI HENRY IV

MARGUERITE DE VALOIS, QUEEN OF FRANCE AND NAVARRE (*ætat* 20)

("QUEEN MARGOT")

From an Engraving after a Drawing by an unknown artist, in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

Marguerite de Valois.

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QUEEN MARGOT

WIFE OF HENRY OF NAVARRE

BY

H. NOEL WILLIAMS

AUTHOR OF "MADAME RÉCAMIER AND HER FRIENDS," "FIVE FAIR SISTERS," "QUEENS OF THE FRENCH STAGE," "LATER QUEENS OF THE FRENCH STAGE," "MADAME DE POMPADOUR," "MADAME DE MONTESPAN," "MADAME DU BARRY," ETC.

"Vous voulez du roman ; que ne vous adressez-vous à l'histoire?"—GUIZOT.

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS
IN PHOTOGRAVURE

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TO

MY WIFE

PREFACE

At no epoch in French history have women played a more prominent part than in the sixteenth century. Their influence pervaded religion, politics, literature, and the arts. They protected Reformers, defied Popes, ruled Kings, shared in every hazard and danger of war, encouraged men-of-letters, patronised artists and sculptors. What a galaxy of famous names do we find! Marguerite d'Angoulême, the Duchesse d'Étampes, Diane de Poitiers, Renée de France, Duchess of Ferrara, Jeanne d'Albret, Catherine de' Medici, Mary Stuart. Yet, if we except the ill-starred Queen of Scotland, the last acts of whose life's tragedy were played out on another stage than that of France, none of these celebrated women furnish material which is at once so acceptable to the student of history and to the general reader as the subject of the present volume.

For not only does Marguerite de Valois typify perhaps more completely than any woman of her time the society of the latter part of the sixteenth century, but her career is the very quintessence of romance. "Born in an evil day," as Catherine de' Medici once remarked to her, this daughter, sister, and wife of kings, though endowed with every outward perfection and with intellectual gifts of an unusually high order, was from her youth the sport of Fortune. Forbidden by "reasons of State" to give her hand to the man who possessed her heart, she was compelled to

wed the young King of Navarre, to whom she was utterly indifferent, and who regarded her with similar feelings. "Her marriage, which seemed to be the occasion for public rejoicing and to be the cause for the reunion of the two parties which divided the realm, was, on the contrary, the occasion of a general mourning and of the renewal of a war more cruel than the one that had preceded it: the *fête* was the St. Bartholomew, the cries and the groans of which resounded throughout all Europe; the festival wine was the blood of the massacred; the viands, the murdered bodies of the innocent pell-mell with the guilty."[1] A union inaugurated under such tragic circumstances, and with no pretence of affection on either side, could bring nothing but unhappiness; and the young queen, neglected by her husband and beset by temptations, was quickly involved in the first of that succession of amorous adventures which have earned for her so unenviable a reputation. The King of Navarre's position, too, which was practically that of a prisoner at the French Court, rendered her own a most difficult and embarrassing one, which the bitter hostility of her brother, Henri III., and his insolent *mignon*, Du Guast, and political complications combined to aggravate. Her husband succeeded in effecting his escape in February 1576, but Marguerite remained as a kind of hostage in the hands of Henri III., and it was not until the summer of 1578 that she was permitted to rejoin him in Gascony. In the interval, she had undertaken her adventurous journey to Flanders, of which she gives us such a vivacious account in her *Mémoires*, in order to further the interests of her younger brother, the Duc d'Anjou, and, on her return to Paris, had assisted the duke to make his escape from Court.

[1] *Mémoires du Cardinal de Richelieu.*

Three years were passed at that little Court of Nérac, which, according to d'Aubigné, "did not deem itself of less importance than the other," a period marked by the "Lovers' War," for which Marguerite herself was, in a great measure, responsible, and more than one scandal, the ill-assorted couple according one another a reciprocal indulgence, of which they both had certainly great need. But at the end of 1581, the Queen of Navarre, irritated by her husband's demands upon her complacency and the intrigues of his mistress, Fosseuse, accepted an invitation from Henri III. and Catherine de' Medici to pay a long visit to the French Court.

This proved a most fatal step, for, after a brief truce, the old animosity between Marguerite and the King revived, and on August 8, 1583, his Majesty grossly and publicly insulted his sister during a ball at the Louvre and commanded her to "deliver the Court from her contagious presence." The unfortunate princess obeyed, and on the morrow set out for Vendôme; but, near Palaiseau, the King, not content with the humiliation he had already inflicted upon her, caused her and some of her people to be arrested and conveyed to the Château of Montargis, where he personally interrogated her ladies in regard to the morals of their mistress.

On the intercession of the Queen-Mother, Marguerite was set at liberty; but the King of Navarre refused to receive his wife until Henri III. had accorded him a full and satisfactory explanation, nor was it until some months later that matters were finally adjusted. The princess returned to Nérac, only to find herself treated by her husband with coldness and contempt, while Henri's new mistress, the Comtesse de Gramont ("*la belle* Corisande"), was continually intriguing against her. Finding

her position becoming intolerable, in March 1585, Marguerite quitted Nérac and proceeded to Agen, one of the towns of her appanage, with the intention of establishing herself as a kind of independent princess. The Catholic gentry of the neighbourhood quickly gathered around her, and a cleverly-conceived *coup d'état* gave her possession of the town. But her attempt to extend her influence over the adjacent districts ended in complete failure; and, in the following November, the citizens of Agen, exasperated by her arbitrary treatment of them, rose in revolt and admitted a body of troops sent by the Governor of Guienne into the town. Marguerite was forced to fly, and made her way to Auvergne, where she took refuge at the Château of Carlat. Here she spent some eighteen not uneventful months, and then removed to the Château of Ibois, near Issoire, only to fall into the hands of the Marquis de Canillac, who had been charged by Henri III. to apprehend her. The marquis conveyed her to the Château of Usson, a mountain fortress which had been rendered almost impregnable by Louis XI., who had used it as a State prison. At Usson the queen was for a time kept in close captivity; but her charms, combined with the offers of the League, prevailed over the loyalty of Canillac, and, in 1587, he abandoned the Royalist cause and surrendered the fortress to his erstwhile prisoner.

In this ark of safety, as she called it, Marguerite spent the next eighteen years of her eventful life, and it was here that she wrote the famous *Mémoires*, "by reason of which an enduring radiance will attach to her name."[1] Very little is known of her life during these years, and in consequence many legends have gathered round it; her

[1] Sainte-Beuve.

panegyrists representing Usson to have been "a Tabor for devotion, a Parnassus for the Muses," while her detractors compare it to the Capræ of Tiberius. After her husband's coronation, as Henri IV. of France, she hastened to make her peace with him; but the King's advisers represented to their master the imperative necessity of providing for an undisputed succession, and, in the spring of 1593, Marguerite, recognising that, after so compromising a past, she could never hope to be Queen of France in anything but name, returned a favourable answer to Henri's proposals for the dissolution of their marriage, the payment of her debts and a handsome pension being offered her as the price of her compliance. Various circumstances, however, the chief of which was the King's passion for Gabrielle d'Estrées, delayed the completion of the affair, and it was not until December 1597 that the marriage was finally dissolved, Marguerite retaining the titles of Queen and Duchesse de Valois.

The princess remained at Usson for some years longer; but, in the summer of 1605, she obtained Henri IV.'s permission to take up her residence at the Château of Madrid, at Boulogne-sur-Seine. Here, however, she only remained a few months, when she removed to Paris, and built herself a magnificent hôtel on the left bank of the Seine, facing the Louvre. In this sumptuous abode she passed her remaining years, living on the friendliest terms with Henri IV., the new Queen, Marie de' Medici, and their children, patronising men-of-letters, dispensing immense sums in charity and among the religious Orders, and flirting with youthful equerries to the great amusement of the Parisians. Towards the end of her life she became exceedingly devout, and ended by attending as

many as three Masses a day. She survived Henri IV. nearly five years, dying on March 27, 1615, within a few weeks of completing her sixty-second year. She was deeply regretted by all classes, for her kindness of heart had endeared her to the Parisians and done much to obliterate the memory of her faults and follies, which, as I have shown elsewhere, have been grossly exaggerated by mendacious chroniclers and the credulous historians who have followed them.

In this volume, as in the earlier ones of the same series, it has been my endeavour to give a full and impartial account of the life of my subject; and also, so far as the space at my disposal has permitted, some account of the historical events in which she was more or less directly concerned, notably those which immediately preceded the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. With this object in view, I have consulted practically all the best contemporary sources of information, and also a very large number of modern works and review articles. Among the former, may be mentioned Marguerite's own memoirs and letters, in the excellent edition undertaken by M. Guessard on behalf of the *Société de l'Histoire de France;* the histories of de Thou, Davila, and d'Aubigné; the journal of L'Estoile, and the memoirs of Brantôme, Sully, and Duplessis-Mornay. Among the latter, I must acknowledge my indebtedness to Comte Léo de Saint-Poncy's *Histoire de Marguerite de Valois, Reine de France et de Navarre*, a very exhaustive work, which, notwithstanding the marked predilections of the writer in favour of his subject, is one of great interest and value; M. Charles Merki's *la Reine Margot et la fin des Valois*, which is distinguished by a more judicial tone than the monograph of M. de Saint-Poncy, and contains, besides, a good deal

of information not hitherto accessible; the charming study of Marguerite in Comte Hector de la Ferrière's *Trois amoureuses au XVI^e. siècle;* M. Philippe Lauzun's *Itinéraire raisonné de Marguerite de Valois en Gascogne;* Mr. P. F. Willert's "Henry of Navarre and the Huguenots in France;" Miss Freer's "Jeanne d'Albret;" Mr. A. W. Whitehead's "Gaspard de Coligny, Admiral of France;" the excellent biographical notes of "Violet Fane" (Lady Currie), appended to her translation of Marguerite's *Mémoires*; and the able articles by M. Georges Gandy on the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, in the *Revue des Questions historiques*, 1866.

H. NOEL WILLIAMS.

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CHAPTER I

Brantôme's eulogy of Marguerite de Valois—Characteristics of the Valois family—The three Marguerites—Early years of Marguerite de Valois—Accession of Charles IX.—Critical condition of the kingdom—Catherine de' Medici—Her character and policy—The Colloquy of Poissy—Progress of Protestantism at this period—Endeavours of the Duc d'Anjou to persuade his sister to embrace the new religion—Outbreak of the first civil war—Marguerite is sent to the Château of Saint-Germain—Her education—Her mother summons her to accompany the court on the "*Grand Voyage*."

"To speak now of the beauty of this rare princess; I believe that all those who are, will be, or ever have been, are plain beside it and cannot have beauty; for the fire of hers so burns the wings of others that they dare not hover or even appear around it. . . . It is believed, on the advice of several, that no goddess was ever seen more beautiful, so that, in order to suitably proclaim her charms, merits, and virtues, God must lengthen the earth and heighten the sky, since space in the air and on the land is lacking for the flight of her perfections and renown." [1]

Thus wrote Brantôme of Marguerite de Valois, eighth child of Henri II. and Catherine de' Medici, and first wife of Henri IV., the restorer of the French monarchy; an exaggerated description no doubt, and one which even the object of his adoration seems to have found a trifle highly-coloured, but which, so far at least as regards the

[1] *Dames illustres.*

princess's outward perfections, finds more than a faint echo in the writings of other contemporary chroniclers.

A strange race were these Valois of Angoulême; a race which personified, in both their good qualities and their defects, the epoch in which they lived; brilliant, frivolous, adventurous; lovers of letters and patrons of the arts; generous, eloquent, quick-witted, and courageous: but bigoted and superstitious, cruel and unscrupulous, dissolute, and deceitful. And, as the Valois were typical of their age, so Marguerite may be said to have been typical of her family, "the most attractive figure, the most curious personality of that truly royal race, which was distinguished by so many happy gifts, whose destiny was marked by so many strange vicissitudes, full of triumphs, uncertainties, and calamities."[1]

Marguerite was born on Sunday, May 14, 1553, in the beautiful Château of Saint-Germain,[2] overlooking the winding course of the Seine, which had been the birth-place of her father Henri II. and her brother Charles IX., and was one day to be the cradle of Louis XIV. The name which she received had already been borne by two celebrated princesses of her House. The first Marguerite was that "paragon and phœnix of ladies, queens, and princesses," the beloved sister of François I., who married, firstly, the Duc d'Alençon, and, afterwards, Henri d'Albret, King of Navarre, and was the author, or compiler, of the "Heptameron" and a writer of charming verse. By her second marriage, Marguerite d'Angoulême, as she was called, became the mother of Jeanne d'Albret, who married Antoine de Bourbon, Duc de Vendôme, and was

[1] Comté Léo de Saint-Poncy, *Marguerite de Valois, Reine de France et de Navarre* (Paris: Gaume, 1887), i. 3.

[2] Some historians have erroneously placed her birth at Fontainebleau.

the mother of Henri the Fourth of France and the Third of Navarre. The second Marguerite was the second daughter of François I., the sister of Henri II., and the wife of Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy. It was during the festivities in honour of the marriage of this princess and of her niece Élisabeth, eldest daughter of Henri II., to Philip II. of Spain that the King of France was fatally wounded in a tournament, by Gabriel de Montgommery, Comte de Lorges, the Captain of his Scottish Guard.

Of Marguerite's childhood we know little, for her famous *Mémoires* contain but scanty information about this period of her life. Her early years were passed at the Château of Saint-Germain, in the company of her elder sisters, Élisabeth and Claude (married, in 1559, to Charles II., Duke of Lorraine), and Marie Stuart, the little Queen of Scotland, who became her sister-in-law, in 1558, by her marriage with the Dauphin (afterwards François II.), under the care of Charlotte de Vienne, Baronne de Curton, "a wise and virtuous lady greatly attached to the Catholic religion," who, according to Marguerite's eighteenth-century historian Mongez, had been the *gouvernante* of seven queens and princesses.[1]

After the marriage of her sisters and Marie Stuart, Marguerite appears to have spent the greater part of her time at the Château of Vincennes and to have had as her companions in her studies and games her two younger brothers, Henri d'Anjou and François d'Alençon, for the latter of whom she early conceived a warm affection, which

[1] She was the fourth wife of Joachim de Chabannes, Seneschal of Toulouse and *chevalier d'honneur* to Catherine de' Medici. After Marguerite's marriage with Henri II. of Navarre, she became her first *dame d'honneur*, a post which she held until her death in 1575.

was returned and endured down to the time of the prince's death in 1584.

In the meanwhile, great changes had been taking place in France. The lance of Montgommery had cut short the life of Henry II. and, after a brief reign of eighteen months, François II., the youthful and sickly husband of Marie Stuart, had followed him to the grave, leaving the Crown to his younger brother, Charles.

Seldom has a reign opened under more unfavourable auspices than that of Charles IX. The King was a boy of ten; several years must elapse before he could be capable of exercising more than a nominal authority, while never had a strong and energetic ruler been more sorely needed. The condition of affairs in France was indeed most critical. To the difficulties which invariably beset a Regency were joined other troubles. Since the death of Henri II., the authority of the Crown had greatly declined; rival factions, the Bourbons, the Montmorencies, and the Guises disputed the power; the Court was a hotbed of intrigue, the people oppressed and discontented; while the antagonism between the Reformation and the Old Religion had assumed a pronounced and openly hostile character.

Such was the situation with which Catherine de' Medici was called upon to deal, when, in the teeth of the rival factions, she took up the reins of government. During the reign of her husband, Catherine had perforce remained in the background, the King being completely under the influence of his mistress, Diane de Poitiers, though once, for a brief period, when Henri II. was with the army in Germany, she had acted as Regent of the Kingdom. Under François II., the government had fallen into the hands of Marie Stuart's uncles, the Duc de

Guise and the Cardinal de Lorraine, and the Queen-Mother had been, politically speaking, a mere cipher. But the early death of François had given her the opportunity which she so ardently desired—for all her life she had hungered for power and influence as a starving man hungers for bread—and she at once assumed a quasi-absolute authority. And that authority once in her hands, all her efforts were henceforth directed to safeguarding it and enabling her to remain the first—the only personage in the State. She brought to the task a remarkable knowledge of men and affairs, the fruit of long years of quiet study and observation, a boundless activity, an untiring vigilance, a charm of manner which few who came into contact with her could resist, and a soul depraved by a life of subjection and dissimulation. Her master-passion was to govern through her sons, and she dreaded every influence which might weaken by one iota her personal authority. In State ceremonies, she loved to be treated as on an equality with them ; at the Estates of Orléans in 1560, her seat was placed on the same level and under the same canopy as that of Charles IX. When, in 1569, she visited Metz, she desired to precede him into the town, with her own cortège of ladies and officers, in order not to be confounded with his suite. In fact, she governed during the whole reign of her second son, resumed the Regency after his death, while awaiting the return of Henri III. from Poland, and her influence may be traced in almost every important act of his reign down to the time of her death.

By the majority of her contemporaries, particularly by those who viewed her only from a distance, Catherine is represented as a sinister figure, with little of the woman

about her save her sex; a creature of Machiavellian subtlety, ambitious, cruel and unscrupulous. This estimate would seem to be in great part erroneous. Ambitious and unscrupulous she certainly was; but she was never cruel, except when it was impossible to gain her ends by other means. Violent measures were naturally alien to her character; when she struck, it was because bribery, cajolery and intimidation had failed. Nor was she, by any means, the profound politician which some would have us believe. The rapid changes of front, the shifty expedients, to which she so constantly resorted, so far from being part of any carefully-matured scheme, were, in most instances, the manœuvres of a timid, irresolute woman, anxious at all costs to escape from the difficulties of the moment and incapable of perceiving any but the immediate consequences of her actions.

If Catherine had really possessed the political sagacity sometimes ascribed to her, she would most certainly, on her assumption of the Regency, have pursued the course suggested to her by her able and disinterested Minister, Michel l'Hôpital. This was to adopt a strictly neutral position, and, by the enforcement of toleration, of civil reform, and of justice, to raise the Crown above the region of controversy and prevent civil war. But the Queen only followed this advice so far as to avoid siding definitely with either party. She was incapable of any noble aim, while it is also probable that she failed to fully realise, at any rate until matters had gone too far to be remedied, the gravity of the situation. "If one follows all her proceedings," writes Châteaubriand, "one perceives that in the whole vast realm of which she was the sovereign, she beheld only a large Florence, the broils of her petty

republic, the risings of one quarter of her native city against another, the quarrels between the Pazzi and the Medici, in the struggle between the Guises and the Châtillons." "To divide in order to reign" was the principle upon which she acted; to give a little encouragement to the Huguenots, to instil a little apprehension into the Catholics, and to accustom both parties to regard her as the dominating factor in the situation. The result was that she was distrusted by both alike, and is more than any one responsible for the thirty years of civil war that thenceforward devastated France.

It must not be supposed, however, that Catherine desired war. On the contrary, she was sincerely anxious to maintain peace. War might mean a decisive victory for the Huguenots, in which case she foresaw that the turbulent nobles who would fight for their old feudal rights under the banner of religious toleration would require far greater concessions than that of freedom of worship. Or it might mean the complete triumph of the Catholics, and the consequent supremacy of the Guises. Both results were equally to be feared.

And so she expressed her warm approval of the Colloquy of Poissy, which took place in the early autumn of 1561, in the hope of arriving at some settlement of the chief points in dispute between the two religions, and, in company with the King, assisted at its deliberations. But the colloquy came to nothing, and, after long and acrimonious discussions, the rival theologians parted more divided in opinion than ever.

It was at the Colloquy of Poissy, and during the months that followed, that Huguenotism reached its

flood-tide, and made its supreme effort to capture France and to found a new national Protestant Church. The Court itself was the centre of the struggle. High-born dames, like Renée de France, Duchess of Ferrara, Jacqueline de Rohan, the Princesse de Porcien, and the Comtesses de Mailly and de la Rochefoucauld, exerted all the influence at their command to make converts. Beza and other eminent divines expounded Calvinistic doctrines, in the lodgings of Coligny and Condé, to congregations largely composed of Catholics. The younger members of the Court, particularly the ladies, began to manifest a decided taste for the new heterodox works, and took pleasure in reading the Holy Scriptures in French and singing the Psalms of Marot. "The numbers and boldness of the Protestants increase daily," wrote Languet, "and the Catholics seemed to be disheartened, little by little."[1] Fashion, ever so powerful in France, was probably no stranger to the progress of Protestantism. "It is with a morbid justice," remarks M. de Saint-Poncy, that Président Hénault observes that "in seeking the true causes of the progress of the Reformation in different countries, one finds that in Germany it was interest,[2] in England love,[3] and in France novelty."[4]

Marguerite de Valois, in her *Mémoires*, casts a curious light upon the trend of opinion in Court circles at this period, and shows us the aristocratic enthusiasts for the

[1] Cited by Mr. A. W. Whitehead, "Gaspard de Coligny, Admiral of France."

[2] The desire of the minor princes of Germany to enrich themselves with the spoils of the Church.

[3] The love of Henry VIII. for Anne Boleyn.

[4] Comte Léo de Saint-Poncy, *Histoire de Marguerite de Valois, Reine de France et de Navarre*, i. 26.

latest fashionable craze carrying their zeal so far as to endeavour to make proselytes by means more forcible than persuasive. It is singular to find at the head of this band of missionaries her brother, the Duc d'Anjou, one of the chief instigators of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew.

Then, again, she says, "is the resistance I made in order to remain faithful to my religion, at the time of the Colloquy of Poissy (when the whole Court was infected with heresy), to the arbitrary persuasions of several lords and ladies of the Court, and even to those of my brother of Anjou, since King of France, whose inexperience had prevented him from escaping the influence of that wretched Huguenoterie, and who never ceased conjuring me to change my religion, very often throwing my Book of Hours into the fire and giving me, in its stead, Huguenot songs and prayers, which I used to hand over at once to Madame de Curton, my *gouvernante*, whom God had done me the favour to keep Catholic, and who would often take me to M. Cardinal de Tournon, who advised and strengthened me in the suffering of all things for the maintenance of my religion, and gave me prayer-books and rosaries, in the place of those which had been burnt by my brother of Anjou. But when others of his intimate friends who were bent upon my destruction discovered that these were once more in my possession, they reviled me angrily, saying that it was youth and stupidity which caused me to act thus; that it was easy to see that I was possessed of no understanding; that all intelligent people, whatever their age or sex, hearing the doctrine of Charity preached, had freed themselves from the trammels of bigotry, but that I should become as foolish as my *gouvernante*. And my brother of Anjou, adding threats

thereunto, declared that the Queen my mother would have me whipped. He said this, however, upon his own responsibility, for the Queen my mother was ignorant of the error into which he had fallen, and when she became aware of it, she reproved him and his tutors as well, and, after having had them instructed, induced them to return to the true, holy, and ancient faith of our fathers, from which she had never departed. I used to say in answer to these threats, melting to tears—as seven or eight, the age I was then, is a somewhat sensitive period—that they might have me whipped or killed if they liked, but that I would endure anything that could be done to me rather than bring about my own damnation." [1]

Marguerite, indeed, remained down to the day of her death a most devout Catholic, that is to say, in the sense of being a rigid observer of the forms and ceremonies of her Church, a practice which was not in those days, and, indeed, down to a very much later period, held to be incompatible with the most irregular of lives.

The enthusiasm of the Court for the new teaching was not of long duration, for Protestantism, partly under the stress of the persecution to which it was subjected at the hands of the Guises and their partisans, and partly through the influence of the ambitious nobles who exploited it for their own selfish purposes, was rapidly passing from a purely religious movement into a political one of a most formidable kind. In March 1562, the massacre of Vassy furnished the occasion for which both parties had been waiting, and a few weeks later the first civil war broke out.

At the commencement of hostilities, Catherine de' Medici separated her children; the young King and her

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard, 1842.)

favourite son, Henri d'Anjou, she kept with her; while Marguerite and the little Duc d'Alençon were sent to the Château of Amboise, so charmingly situated on the banks of the Loire. Three years earlier, Amboise had been the scene of tragic events; but now it was peaceful, and had been chosen by the Queen-Mother as being sufficiently far removed from the theatre of war to prove a safe retreat for her younger children. Here Marguerite and her brother were able to continue their studies, undisturbed by the turmoil in which the greater part of the country was plunged; the former under the direction of Madame de Curton and the learned and pious Henri Le Maignan, afterwards Bishop of Digne, the latter under that of his *gouverneur*, Du Plessis.

Catherine de' Medici, belonging to a family in which love for the arts was hereditary, exercised the most careful supervision over the education of her children and spared no pains to secure for them the services of the most capable teachers of the day. The classics, grammar, history, the Holy Scriptures—from the study of which, it must be confessed, they would appear to have derived singularly little benefit—all were carefully taught them. The savant Amyot, Bishop of Auxerre, one of the most profound scholars of his time, whose translation of Plutarch enjoyed so great a vogue, was tutor to Charles IX. and Henri d'Anjou, and gave lessons also to Catherine's younger children. "It is not his least glory," remarks M. de Saint-Poncy, "to have cultivated the mind of the young Princess of Valois and to have prepared, by his learned instruction, one of the most eloquent writers of this remarkable century. The perusal of Marguerite's *Mémoires* reveals the impression which Plutarch made upon her; one finds there many passages reminiscent of

this work, which had on its appearance an incomparable success, confirmed by posterity."[1]

Nor were other studies neglected; music, singing, painting, and dancing—in which accomplishment the last Valois seemed to have particularly excelled—were taught them by the best masters that could be procured. Marguerite received instruction in music and singing from the celebrated singer, Étienne Leroy, and Paul de Rège, who had been the dancing-master of Marie Stuart, gave her lessons in the choregraphic art.

At the conclusion of the first civil war, in the spring of 1563, Catherine, freed for a time from her dread of the Guises, by the assassination of their chief,[2] decided that her best chance of maintaining her influence, lay in placing her eldest son at the head of the Catholic party, and directing her efforts to the gradual ruin, by peaceful means, of the Protestants, now become by far the most formidable opponents of the royal authority. The King had been declared of age, but the effective authority remained in the hands of his mother, who now persuaded him to undertake a grand progress through the various provinces of his realm, and sent for Marguerite, who was not yet twelve years old, to accompany her. Catherine hoped much from this progress, which was intended to make the young sovereign acquainted with the position of affairs in the provinces, and to impose by his presence respect for the edicts of toleration accorded the Huguenots, while, at the same time, weakening their influence and rendering it difficult for them to recommence hostilities.

[1] Comte Léo de Saint-Poncy, *Marguerite de Valois, Reine de France et de Navarre*, i. 17.

[2] François de Lorraine, Duc de Guise, was assassinated by Poltrot de Méré while besieging Orléans, on February 18, 1563.

CHAPTER II

The "*Grand Voyage*"—The interview of Bayonne—Fête on the Isle of Aiguemeau—Huguenot excesses in Béarn—Marguerite returns to Paris—Beginning of the second civil war—Attempts of the Huguenots to seize the King at Monceaux—Flight of the court to Paris—Battle of Saint-Denis—The Duc d'Anjou proposes to Marguerite a political rôle—Marguerite is admitted to her mother's confidence—Arrival of the Court at Saint-Jean-d'Angely—Du Guast—Anjou accuses Marguerite of encouraging the attentions of the Duc de Guise—Catherine de' Medici withdraws her confidence from her daughter—Marguerite's reason for denying her passion for Guise in her *Mémoires*.

The Court quitted Paris on Monday, January 24, 1564, and proceeded through Champagne and Lorraine to Bar-le-Duc, where magnificent fêtes were held in honour of the baptism of Marguerite's nephew, the Prince of Lorraine, son of her second sister Claude and Duke Charles II. Burgundy and Dauphiné were next visited, and at the Château of Roussillon, Charles IX. signed the celebrated Ordinance of that name, whereby it was enacted that, for all official purposes, the year should henceforth begin on January 1, instead of, as heretofore, on Easter Sunday, or, to be more exact, on Holy Saturday after vespers. The winter of 1564–1565 was passed at Lyons, where the Duke and Duchess of Savoy visited the Court and were splendidly entertained. Then, at the beginning of the spring, the progress was resumed, and the Court

proceeded to Bayonne, which was the limit of the journey. Here an interesting family meeting took place, the young Queen of Spain, Catherine's eldest daughter, coming from Madrid to greet her relatives, accompanied by the ill-fated Don Carlos—Philip II.'s son by his first wife—and the famous—or infamous—Duke of Alva, who was charged to invest the King of France with the Order of the Golden Fleece.

Alva's mission masked one of far greater importance, nothing less than to endeavour to prevail upon Charles and Catherine to enter into a treaty with Philip for the extirpation of the Protestants both in France and the Netherlands; and some Protestant historians go so far as to assert that it was here that the project of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew was first determined on. But contemporary documents, such as Alva's own letters and the papers of Cardinal de Granvelle, clearly prove that the proposals of the terrible general were very coldly received by Catherine, and that he was given nothing but the vaguest assurances; while it should be remembered that Alva, in marked contrast to his master, expressed the strongest disapprobation of the horrors of the St. Bartholomew, not, of course, on humanitarian, but on political grounds, declaring it to be "a mad, fatuous, and badly-conceived act."

If Alva failed in his mission, he had no reason to be dissatisfied with the reception which he and his royal mistress received at Bayonne. With Catherine de' Medici, it was a point of honour to dazzle the eyes of foreigners with the magnificence of the Court of France, and the French nobles ably seconded her efforts. Marguerite, in her *Mémoires*, describes at length the superb féte and ballet, which Charles IX. and the Queen-

Mother gave on St. John's Eve, on the Isle of Aiguemeau, in the Adour.

"The shape of a room," she writes, "was designed in the middle of an island, as though by Nature, in a large oval meadow, enclosed by stately trees, around which the Queen my mother had arranged niches, in each of which was placed a circular table for twelve persons, whilst that of their Majesties was raised at the end of the enclosure upon a daïs, approached by four grass steps. All these tables were served by different groups of shepherdesses dressed in cloth-of-gold and satin, according to the various costumes of all the provinces of France. Upon our disembarking from the magnificent boats (in which, all the way from Bayonne to the island, we were accompanied by several sea-gods, who sang and recited verses to their Majesties), these shepherdesses were discovered, each group apart, in meadows upon either side of a grass valley, which led to the aforesaid enclosure, dancing after the manner of their provinces — the Poitevines with the bagpipes, the Provençales with shawms and cymbals, the Bourguignones and Champenoises with small hautboys, round fiddles, and rustic tambourines, the Bretonnes dancing the *passe-pieds* and the *branles-gais*, and so on in respect of all the other provinces. After the performances of these shepherdesses and the feast itself were concluded, a band of musicians, accompanied by a troupe of satyrs, entered that large luminous grotto, which was even more brilliantly illuminated by the radiant beauty and the precious stones of a bevy of nymphs, who made their entry from above, than by the artificial light. These nymphs and satyrs descended and danced that beautiful ballet, whereof Fortune waxed envious and unable to endure its glories,

brought about such an extraordinary storm of wind and rain that the confusion of the retreat which took place, in the dark, by boat, furnished material for more diverting stories than even the fête had afforded.

After a brilliant series of entertainments : tournaments, fêtes, illuminations, and banquets, the two Courts separated, and Élisabeth reluctantly bade farewell to her family, which she was never to see again [1] and set out with Alva and Don Carlos on her return journey ; while the French Court proceeded to Nérac, the favourite residence of Jeanne d'Albret, Queen of Navarre. Their journey thither lay, in great part, through the dominions of that estimable but bigoted princess, and the more devout Catholics of the party were horror-struck by the signs of the devastation recently committed by the Huguenots, in revenge for the cruelties perpetrated on their co-religionists in other parts of France. For Jeanne had proscribed the Catholic religion and persecuted its adherents, and ruined monasteries, desecrated churches, broken crosses, and mutilated images were to be seen on every side.

On their arrival at Nérac, Charles IX. and Catherine

[1] Élisabeth de Valois died on October 3, 1568. It was firmly believed by many of her contemporaries that his Catholic Majesty had caused his young wife to be poisoned ; and, according to Sully, it was to avenge this supposed crime that Charles IX. desired to wrest from Spain Flanders and Artois. "The King (Charles IX.)," he writes, "had several causes of complaint against the King of Spain, and, among others, the death, which he was well aware that he had procured, of his wife, Élisabeth de France, owing to his jealousy of the good understanding that she had with Prince Charles (Don Carlos), his eldest son, on account of which he was resolved to make war upon him." The latest investigations of historical criticism, however, exonerate the much-abused monarch from the crime imputed to him, and everything tends to the belief that Élisabeth died a natural death.

addressed a vigorous remonstrance to the Queen, and ordered the immediate re-establishment of the Old Religion. Jeanne was compelled to obey; but the toleration thus extorted from her only lasted until the renewal of the civil war, when the persecution of the luckless Catholics of Béarn and Navarre was resumed with more severity than before.

The "*grand voyage*," as it is termed, concluded with a visit to the central provinces, and after having assisted, in company with their Majesties, at the celebrated Assembly of Moulins, where Coligny was declared guiltless of all responsibility for the assassination of the Duc de Guise, Marguerite returned with the Court to Paris, which was reached on May 1, 1566.

In September of the following year, civil war broke out again. Although, as we have seen, Catherine had rejected the drastic proposals of Alva, with regard to the Protestants, the latter had drawn the worst inferences from the Bayonne interview; and the refusal of the Government to disband a force of 6000 Swiss mercenaries, which had been raised to protect the Eastern frontier from any aggression on the part of the Spanish troops marching from Italy to the Netherlands, alarmed and exasperated them to the last degree. Their chiefs met in council at Valery and Châtillon, and, though Coligny pleaded eloquently for peace, he was overruled, and it was resolved to seize the person of the King, to capture some of the stronger towns, and to fall upon and annihilate the Swiss. Rozoy, in Brie, was selected as the rendezvous.

The first move in this desperate game was within an ace of being successful. The Court was at the Château of

Monceaux, in Brie, which belonged to Catherine, occupied with fêtes and hunting-parties, when the Sieur de Castelnau, whom Charles IX. had despatched on a political mission to Brussels, arrived with the news that the Huguenots were everywhere preparing to rise in arms. The King was at first incredulous, and l'Hôpital declared that "it was a capital offence to give a false warning to a prince, which might cause him to distrust his subjects."[1] However, a few days later, word was brought that armed men were patrolling all the roads in the neighbourhood, and that a body of cavalry was encamped in a wood in which his Majesty had announced his intention of hunting on the following morning. In great alarm, Charles despatched messengers to Château-Thierry to summon the Swiss, who were stationed there, to his succour; and on September 22, the Court quitted Monceaux and threw itself into the town of Meaux. The Swiss arrived at midnight on the 24th, and, on the advice of their commander Pfeiffer, who pledged himself, "to make a lane for their Majesties through the army of their enemies," it was resolved to retire on Paris. Accordingly, at daybreak on the 28th, they left Meaux, the Swiss marching in the form of a square, with the Royal Family in their midst, while the gentlemen of the Court and their servants formed the advance- and rear-guards of the cortège. At Lagny, they were met by the Huguenot cavalry under Condé and Coligny; but the latter were not as yet in sufficient force to risk an engagement,[2] and recoiled before the resolute attitude of the Swiss, who, "lowering their pikes, ran at them like mad dogs, at full

[1] *Mémoires de Castelnau*, vi. 1.

[2] Not more than five or six hundred horse, according to Protestant writers.

speed." And so, guarded by foreign mercenaries from the wrath of his rebellious subjects, Charles IX. reached his capital, burning with shame and indignation at the extremity to which he had been reduced.

The Huguenots followed and, having been reinforced, encamped at Saint-Denis and proceeded to blockade Paris, although their army does not seem to have exceeded 6000 men, and they were without artillery; while the old Constable de Montmorency, with a vastly superior force, lay within the city. The Constable, however, had grown cautious with age and was disinclined to take the offensive, and it was not until the necessity of opposing the advance of a Spanish corps from the Netherlands had compelled the Huguenots to despatch a considerable portion of their slender forces, under Coligny's brother, Andelot, and Montgommery, in the direction of Poissy, that he ventured to give battle. In the result, the Protestants, who were outnumbered by as many as five to one, were compelled to retreat, though all the honours of the day were unquestionably theirs, and the Constable himself was amongst the slain. Thus commenced the second stage of this sanguinary struggle, which, save for the brief respite ensured by the Peace of Longjumeau, was to ravage France for four years.

In the midst of these stirring events, history makes little mention of Marguerite; but the princess herself relates a curious episode, which is a striking testimony to the fear and respect in which Catherine de' Medici was held by her children and to the intriguing character of the future Henri III.

After the battle of Jarnac, in which a felon-shot had

deprived the Huguenots of their gallant leader Condé,[1] the Court proceeded to Plessis-lès-Tours to join the victorious Anjou.[2] One day, while Marguerite was walking with her mother and brothers in the beautiful park which surrounded the ancient château, Henri drew her down a quiet alley and addressed her as follows :

"Sister, early association no less than close kinship, constrains us to love one another, and you must have been well aware that I, of all of your brothers, have ever been the most solicitous for your welfare, while I have remarked that you too were disposed to return me a like affection. Until now, we have been naturally inclined to this, without such intimacy having been productive of any advantage to us, except the mere pleasure we have derived from conversing together. During our childhood, this was well enough ; but the time has gone by for behaving like children. You see the great and important posts to which God has called me and for which I have been trained by the Queen our good mother. You may rest assured that, since you are the one thing in the world that I most love and cherish, I shall never possess either honours or worldly goods in which you will not participate."

After this insinuating preamble, Anjou frankly requested his sister's aid. "Your intelligence and judg-

[1] Condé was shot, after he had surrendered himself a prisoner, by the Baron de Montesquiou, a creature of Anjou, very probably by that prince's orders.

[2] On the death of the old Constable de Montmorency, in the Battle of Saint-Denis, Catherine had declined to fill the vacant office, but had persuaded Charles IX. to give the command of the royal forces to Henri d'Anjou, with the title of Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom ; Maréchal de Tavannes being chosen to direct the operations of the youthful commander.

ment," said he, "may be of service to me in influencing the Queen our mother to retain me in my present fortune. Now, my chief support consists in remaining in her good graces. I dread lest absence may injure me, and yet the war and my appointments oblige me to be almost always at a distance. Meanwhile, the King my brother is continually at her side, flattering her and humouring her in everything. I fear that, in the end, this will be prejudicial to me, and that the King my brother, growing up and being brave, as he is, may not always continue to amuse himself with hunting, but may become ambitious and substitute the chase of men for that of beasts and deprive me of the post of King's lieutenant which he bestowed upon me, in order that he may join the forces himself. This would be so great an annoyance and humiliation to me that I should prefer a painful death rather than endure such a fall. In considering the means of dispelling this apprehension, I find that it is necessary for me to have some very faithful persons devoted to my interests, to uphold my influence with the Queen my mother. I know none so suitable as you, whom I look upon as my second self. You possess all the requisite qualifications : wit, understanding, and fidelity. If you will only add obedience thereunto, by being always present in her cabinet, at her *lever* and at her *coucher*, in short, continually, this, combined with what I shall tell her of your capacity, will constrain her to confide in you ; and I shall beg her no longer to treat you as a child, but to make use of you, in my absence, as of myself. This, I am assured, she will do. Rid yourself of your timidity. Talk to her freely, as you do to me, and, believe me, she will listen graciously. It will be an honour and a happiness to you to be loved by her. You will greatly advantage both yourself and me,

and I shall be beholden to you, after God, for the maintenance of my good fortune."

Marguerite tells us that these overtures occasioned her the most profound astonishment. She, a young girl of sixteen, who had had not a thought beyond dancing and hunting, was invited to become a political woman! Moreover, she had been brought up to regard her mother with such awe that not only did she never dare to address her, but trembled when her Majesty so much as glanced in her direction, for fear that she might have done something to offend her; and, consequently, she felt inclined to answer her brother as Moses replied to God, on beholding the vision of the burning bush: "Who am I? Send, I pray Thee, by the hand of him whom Thou oughtest to send." However, when she had recovered from the first surprise, she began to feel highly gratified by her brother's words, and "it seemed to her that she was transformed and had become something greater than her former self." She, accordingly, hastened to assure him that "no one on earth loved and respected him as she did," and that, when with the Queen, she would act entirely in his interests.

A day or two afterwards, Catherine summoned Marguerite to her cabinet, and then told her that she had been informed by her son of the conversation he had had with his sister, and that it was her intention to admit her to her confidence and permit her to speak to her freely.

Marguerite's life now underwent a great change. Hitherto her time had been fully occupied with childish games and the ordinary amusements of the Court; but, proud of being admitted to her mother's confidence, she now affected a fine scorn for all these frivolities, "as

things utterly vain and unprofitable," and began to devote all her attention to politics—the tortuous politics of that strange epoch, when the friend of to-day might become the enemy of to-morrow, and a man's deadliest foes were often those who were loudest in their professions of devotion. She made it her unvarying rule, she tells us, to be the first at the Queen's *lever* and the last at her *coucher*, in order to lose not a moment of this precious intimacy; and her mother sometimes conversed with her for two or three hours at a time, though whether these lengthy conferences were of quite so important a nature as the princess intends us to believe, we are inclined to doubt. Catherine de' Medici was never over-fond of confidantes, least of all of young ladies of sixteen.

Matters continued on this footing untll the late autumn of 1569, when the Court arrived at Saint-Jean-d'Angely, to join Anjou, who was laying siege to that town. Here a mortification as bitter as it was unexpected awaited the princess, which she attributes to the evil offices of a favourite of her brother named Du Guast, who had supplanted her in the confidence of the duke.

A member of a very old family of Dauphiné, Louis de Béranger, Seigneur du Guast or du Gast—the name is variously spelt—had come when still a youth to the Court of the Valois, where his courage, audacity, and wit quickly brought him into prominence.[1] Having decided that the patronage of one of the Royal Family might

[1] A portrait of Du Guast is preserved among the sixteenth-century drawings in the Cabinet des Estampes, "which shows us just such a man as we should expect to find, with a convex forehead, a red beard, worn short and cut to a point, and a thin, disdainful mouth. The dominant expression of this countenance is audacity tempered by craft."—La Ferrière, *Trois amoureuses du XVI^e siècle : Marguerite de Valois.*

facilitate his advancement, he insinuated himself into the good graces of Anjou, and opens the list of that long succession of favourites who exercised so deplorable an influence over that prince. Determined to enjoy an absolute authority over his master, he left no means untried to discredit those who might be inclined to dispute it with him, and "influenced him so entirely that he saw only through his eyes and spoke only through his lips." "This bad man, born to do evil," continues Marguerite, "had at once fascinated his mind and filled it with a thousand tyrannical maxims: 'That one ought only to love and trust oneself; that one should involve no one else in one's own destiny, not even a brother or a sister'; together with other fine Machiavellian precepts, wherewith having become imbued, he set about putting them into practice." [1]

The princess, who had come to Saint-Jean-d'Angely, in confident anticipation of being received by her brother, with all the demonstrations of affection and gratitude, which the services she had rendered, or flattered herself that she had rendered, him warranted, was speedily disillusioned. "As soon as we had arrived," she writes, "after the first salutations, my mother began praising me and saying how loyally I had stood his friend with her. He answered coldly that he was very glad that what he had suggested had turned out so well, but that prudence did not always permit one to make use of the

[1] In contradiction to Marguerite and the majority of contemporary chroniclers, her friend Brantôme describes Du Guast as a man of some merit and asserts that when Henri d'Anjou became King, he exercised a beneficial influence over him. "I have seen him," he writes, "remonstrate with the King, when he perceived that he was doing anything wrong or when he heard it reported of him. The King took it in good part, and used to correct himself."

same expedients, and that what was necessary at one time might be dangerous at another. She asked him his reason for speaking thus. Upon which, seeing that the moment had come for the invention he had fabricated on purpose to destroy me, he replied that I was becoming beautiful and that M. de Guise[1] was turning his thoughts upon me, and that his uncles[2] aspired to make a marriage between us; that she was aware of the ambition of that House [the House of Lorraine] and of how it had always embarrassed ours; and that, for this reason, it would be as well that she should no longer talk to me of affairs, and that she should gradually withdraw herself from all intimacy with me."

Marguerite goes on to tell us that she omitted nothing to convince her mother of her innocence, assuring her that she had never heard of this report, and that if the Duc de Guise had had any such intention, she would certainly have informed the Queen of it, the moment he mentioned the subject to her. But her protestations were vain, "for her brother's words had taken such possession of the Queen's mind that there was no room in it for either reason or truth;" and from that moment Catherine ceased to admit her daughter to her confidence.

The *Mémoires* of Marguerite de Valois are deserving of all that the greatest critic of modern times has said in their praise;[3] they are models of finesse, of skill, and of diction; but they are the work of a daughter of Catherine de' Medici, and it would perhaps be too much to expect to find there candour as well. They are, indeed, in

[1] Henri de Lorraine, Duc de Guise, assassinated at Blois, December 23, 1588.

[2] The Cardinals de Lorraine and de Guise, and the Duc d'Aumâle.

[3] See the study by Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, vi. 190 *et seq.*

great part, an apology for the life of the writer, who poses throughout as an injured woman, displays an infinite art in explaining away the scandals imputed to her, and in guarding against any statement calculated to injure her with those whom she desired to conciliate. Such being her object, it is not surprising that she should refuse to betray any predilection for the Duc de Guise,[1] and should be careful to conceal the nature of the relation between them, since the *Mémoires* were written while she was a prisoner at the Château of Usson, and the Guises had been the most bitter enemies of her husband Henri IV. and his advisers, in whose good graces she was above all things anxious to reinstate herself. But the student of sixteenth-century history will peruse her protestations with a smile of incredulity, for the love of Marguerite de Valois for Henri de Lorraine, and even a project of marriage between them, so far from being inventions of Du Guast and Henri d'Anjou, "fabricated for the purpose of destroying her," are notorious facts, established

[1] So anxious indeed is Marguerite to induce her readers to believe that the suspicions of her brother were entirely unfounded that, almost on the first page of her *Mémoires*, she relates that, a few days before the fatal accident to Henri II., she was sitting on her father's knee, watching the Duc de Guise (then Prince de Joinville) and the little Marquis de Beaupréau, only son of the Prince de la Roche-sur-Yon, playing together, when the King laughingly asked her which of the two boys she would like best for a sweetheart. "I replied," she continues, "that I should prefer the marquis." "Why," said he, "he is not so handsome" (for the Prince de Joinville was light-haired and fair, while the Marquis de Beaupréau had a brown complexion and dark hair)? "I replied that it was because he was the better boy, whereas the other was never satisfied unless he was doing harm to somebody every day, and that he always wanted to be master—a true prophecy of what we have since seen fulfilled."

not only by the testimony of the pamphleteers, but by writers the most worthy of belief and the least suspected of partiality: Président de Thou, Mathieu, Davila and Mézeray, and also by the diplomatic correspondence of the time.

CHAPTER III

Beauty, elegance, and intelligence of Marguerite—Early career and character of Guise—Marguerite's illness at Saint-Jean-d'Angely—Perfidious conduct of Anjou—His hatred of Guise—Nature of Marguerite's relations with the duke considered—Their intimacy the chief topic of conversation at Court—Interview between Catherine de' Medici and the Cardinal de Lorraine—An intercepted letter—Charles IX. orders Henri d'Angoulême to assassinate Guise—Intervention of Marguerite—And of the Duchess of Lorraine—Angry scene between Charles IX. and Guise—The duke renounces his pretensions to Marguerite's hand, and marries the Princess de Porcien—Anjou's threat—Consequences of this affair.

And, indeed, it would have been difficult to find in all France a better-matched pair of lovers. Marguerite, then in her seventeenth year, was, if Brantôme and the other historians and poets who have described her charms are to be credited, exquisitely beautiful. She had "a lovely fair face that resembled the heavens in their sweetest and calmest serenity, so nobly formed as to cause one to declare that Mother Nature, that very perfect workwoman, had put all her rarest and subtlest into the fashioning of it"; a complexion of dazzling fairness, beautiful blue eyes shaded by long lashes, which shone with an unconscious desire to please and that native coquetry which rendered her later so redoubtable, and a superb figure, "of a port and majesty more like to a

goddess of heaven than a princess of earth." Her hair, which was very abundant, was black, but as golden tresses were considered to harmonise best with her complexion, she often concealed it beneath a coiffure of pale-coloured curls. "Nevertheless," writes the enthusiastic Brantôme, "I have seen this magnificent princess wear her own hair without any additional contrivance in the shape of a wig; and, in spite of its being black, like that of her father, King Henri, she knew so well how to curl, frizzle, and arrange it, in imitation of her sister, the Queen of Spain (who always wore her own, which was black like a Spaniard's). that such head-dress became her as well, or better, than any other she could invent."[1] A beautiful girl indeed! But "it was the beauty sensual and appetising, which attracts and retains men; the beauty made 'to damn us,' as Don Juan of Austria will exclaim later, on beholding her at the Louvre."[2]

Unfortunately, Marguerite does not appear to have been contented with the charms which a bountiful Nature had bestowed upon her, and not only did she prefer to conceal her own hair beneath borrowed tresses, but was wont to appear with her lovely face, which had so little need of artificial aid, "all bedaubed and painted." The washes and cosmetics which she so freely employed, in order to preserve the freshness of her complexion, had the very opposite effect, and produced rashes and pimples, which must have occasioned her great mortification.

Besides being the acknowledged Queen of Beauty,

[1] Brantôme, *Dames illustres*. Towards the end of her life, Marguerite had no dark hair left and went to great expense in fair wigs. For this purpose, she kept several "tall, fair-haired footmen, who were shaved from time to time."

[2] La Ferrière, *Trois Amoureuses du XVI^e siècle: Marguerite de Valois*.

Marguerite was the Queen of Fashion as well; and it was to the example set by her, so Brantôme assures us, that the ladies of the French Court were indebted for the fact that they had become "great ladies, instead of simple mesdames, and so a hundredfold more charming and desirable."

"I remember (for I was present)," he writes, "that when the Queen-Mother took the Queen her daughter to her husband, the King of Navarre, she passed through Cognac and abode there some days. While they were there, came divers great and honourable ladies of the neighbourhood to see them and do them reverence, who were all amazed at the beauty of the princess and could not praise her enough to her mother, she being lost in joy. Whereupon, she prayed her daughter to array herself most sumptuously in the fine and superb apparel that she wore at Court for great and magnificent pomps and festivities, in order to give pleasure to these worthy dames. And this she did to obey so good a mother, appearing robed superbly in a gown of silver tissue and dove-colour, *à la Boulonnoise*, with hanging sleeves, a costly head-dress, and a white veil, neither too large nor yet too small, the whole accompanied by such noble majesty and perfect grace that one would have judged her rather a goddess of heaven than a princess of earth. The Queen-Mother said to her: 'My daughter, that costume becomes you admirably.' To which she made answer: 'Madame, I begin early to wear and to wear out my gowns and the fashions that I have brought with me from Court; because when I return, I shall bring nothing with me, save scissors and stuffs only, to dress myself there in accordance with the current fashions. 'Why do you say that, my daughter?' inquired the Queen-Mother.

'Is it not yourself who invent and produce these fine fashions in dress, and, wherever you go, the Court will take them from you, not you from the Court;' so well did she understand how to invent in her daring mind all kinds of charming things."

In fact, continues Brantôme, whatever she chose to wear, elaborate or simple, the effect was ever the same —all eyes were dazzled, all hearts ravished, so that it was impossible to say which became her best and "made her most beautiful, admirable and lovable." And then he goes on to give us some details concerning Marguerite's chief triumphs in this direction, which prove that the Sieur de Brantôme must have possessed a remarkably observant eye, as well as a tenacious memory: "the gown of shimmering white satin, a trifle of rose-colour mingling in it, with a veil of lace crêpe or Roman gauze thrown carelessly round her head, making the goddesses of olden times, and the empresses, as we see them on ancient coins, look like chambermaids beside her"; the gown "of rose-coloured Spanish velvet, covered with spangles, and with a cape of the same velvet, with plumes and jewels of such splendour as never was," in which she appeared at the Tuileries, at the fête given by the Queen-Mother, in August 1573, to the Polish envoys who had come to offer the crown of Poland to Henri d'Anjou, on which occasion Brantôme compared her to Aurora, and Ronsard, who was with him, "finding the comparison very excellent, made a beautiful sonnet thereon"; the confection of orange and black, "the black relieved by a multitude of spangles," which she wore at the Estates of Blois, in 1576; and, finally, the marvellous "robe of crinkled cloth-of-gold," which, together with the charms of the wearer, made all the courtiers forget their devotions on

Palm Sunday 1572, and of which we shall permit the chronicler to speak at greater length in its place.

And this lovely and elegant princess was no insipid beauty, without a thought in her pretty head beyond the shape of a coiffure or the fit of a gown. She was a clever, even a talented woman. A true grand-daughter of François I., she had inherited the intellectual tastes of the "Father of Letters" and read widely and with discrimination. As she grew older, her love for books became so intense that when once she had become interested in any work, nothing could induce her to lay it aside until finished, "and very often she would lose both her eating and drinking." A complete mistress of her native tongue, as her *Mémoires* and letters prove, and well-acquainted with more than one foreign language, she was also a sound classical scholar. When Adam Kanarski, Bishop of Posen, the head of the Embassy from Poland, already mentioned, harangued her in Latin, she replied at once eloquently and pertinently without the aid of an interpreter, to the wonder and admiration of the learned prelate and his colleagues. She would seem indeed to have been an admirable speaker, since on the occasion of a visit to Bordeaux, in 1578, we hear of her making three speeches in succession; one in answer to the bishop of the diocese, the second to that of the governor of the province, and the third in reply to an address presented her by the First President of the Parliament of Bordeaux, "even changing her words to each, without reiterating in the last speech anything which she had said in the first or second, although upon the same subject." So that the president was afterwards heard to declare that, though her two predecessors on the throne of Navarre, Marguerite d'Angoulême and Jeanne d'Albret, had had in their day

"the most golden-speaking lips in France," they were "but novices and apprentices compared with her."

Her conversation, "grave and full of majesty and eloquence in high and serious discourse," was on ordinary occasions distinguished by a very pretty wit, without, however, Brantôme is careful to tell us, a suspicion of malice, and a wonderful quickness of repartee which made her the life and soul of any company she might happen to be in.

It is indeed lamentable to reflect that a woman possessed of so many natural advantages and so singularly gifted should have been ruined by the vitiated atmosphere amidst which she was brought up, and by that complete absence of moral sense which distinguished the later Valois. But at the time of her love-affair with the Duc de Guise, Marguerite was still only a girl, and the unpleasant side of her character was as yet undeveloped. It will be time enough to speak of that later on.

If Marguerite easily eclipsed all the women of the Court, the Duc de Guise exercised a like pre-eminence over the nobles who adorned it, at least over those of the younger generation. At the time of the assassination of his father, the second Duc de Guise, in February 1563, Henri de Lorraine was in his thirteenth year, when, as the eldest son of the celebrated soldier,[1] he succeeded to his title and, at the dying duke's special request, to all his

[1] By his marriage with Anne d'Este, daughter of Ercole d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, François de Lorraine had five children. (1) Henri, Prince de Joinville, third Duke de Guise, born December 31, 1550. (2) Catherine Marie, born July 1552, married to Louis Duc de Montpensier. (3) Charles, Marquis, afterwards Duc de Mayenne, born March 1554. (4) Louis, Cardinal de Guise, born July 1555. (5) François, born December 1558, died October 1573.

offices, which comprised those of Grand Master, Grand Chamberlain, and Governor of Champagne and Brie. Although so young, he had accompanied his father in his last campaign, and at the siege of Orléans, where François de Lorraine lost his life, had had more than one opportunity of giving proof of that cool intrepidity for which he was subsequently remarkable. After the Peace of Amboise, which brought to an end the first civil war, he went to Vienna, in the hope of seeing service against the Turks, and met with a very flattering reception at the Imperial Court. But the inactivity of the Austrian troops gave him no chance of earning the military renown for which he craved, and, in the spring of 1567, he returned to France. On the renewal of the Wars of Religion, Guise was sent with his uncle, the Duc d'Aumâle, to the North-Eastern frontier, where he was rash enough to attack Coligny with a much inferior force, and to be driven back with heavy loss. Nor was he more fortunate at the beginning of the second civil war. Entrusted with the command of a body of men-at-arms, in the royal army under Anjou and Tavannes, the duke, burning to distinguish himself, ignored the orders of both; and the disaster of Roche-Abeille (June 1569) was largely due to his insubordination.[1] However, the memory of these failures was soon effaced, in the public mind at least, by his heroic defence of Poitiers against Coligny, a feat which recalled his father's historical defence of Metz in 1555; and from that time Henri de Lorraine became a popular hero, the idol of Catholic France.

"France was mad about this man," writes Balzac, "for it is too little to say that she was in love with him. Her passion approached idolatry; there were persons who

[1] *Mémoires de Tavannes.*

invoked him in their prayers, others who inscribed his portrait in their books. His portrait, indeed, was everywhere; some ran after him in the street to touch his mantle with their rosaries, and one day, when he entered Paris by the Porte Saint-Antoine, on his return from a journey to Champagne, they not only cried: '*Vive Guise*'! but many sang: '*Hosanna filio David*'! Large assemblies were known to yield themselves at once captive to his pleasant countenance. No heart could resist that face; it persuaded before he opened his mouth . . . And Huguenots belonged to the League when they beheld the Duc de Guise."

That such should have been the case is not difficult to understand, for Guise possessed in a pre-eminent degree all those qualities which command the admiration and affection of an impressionable people. To a commanding stature and extraordinary physical strength he united "the delicate beauty and the Southern grace of his Borgia ancestors."[1] He excelled in all manly exercises: horsemanship, swimming, fencing, tennis, the use of arms. His manners were charming; he had a smile and a pleasant word for all, rich and poor alike, and would converse as readily with the tradesman at his shop door or the artisan at his toil as with the noble at the Court; while his liberality was such that it was said that he was the greatest usurer in France, since every one was in his debt, either for monetary assistance or for some favour received.

Guise had undoubtedly great gifts: dauntless courage, untiring energy, a remarkable keenness of perception, a rare sagacity in estimating character, and a wonderful aptitude for the management of affairs. But they were

[1] Mr. H. C. McDowall, "Henry of Guise and other Portraits."

discounted by grave faults. His ambition was boundless,[1] and he was quite unscrupulous as to the means employed to attain his ends; he was wanting in patience and foresight and, like his uncle, the crafty Cardinal de Lorraine, carried dissimulation to its furthest limits.

So mortified was Marguerite de Valois by the accusations of her brother, and the consequent withdrawal of the confidence which the Queen-Mother had reposed in her, that she fell into a state of the most profound depression, and, while in this condition, was attacked by "a severe and continuous purple fever" ("*une grande fièvre continuë et du pourpre*"), which was then ravaging the camp of the besiegers and had already carried off the two first physicians of the King, Chapelain and Castelan,[2] as though seeking, according to Marguerite's expression, "to do away with the shepherds in order to make short work of the flock."

The princess was seriously ill, and for more than a fortnight her life was in danger. "Whilst I was in this extremity," she says, "my mother, who knew what was partly the cause of my illness, omitted nothing which could relieve me, taking the trouble to visit me at all hours, regardless of danger. This alleviated my sufferings considerably; but they were correspondingly increased by the duplicity of my brother (Anjou), who, after having behaved thus treacherously towards me and shown me

[1] According to an historian of the Guises, René de Bouillé, who, however, does not give his authority, François de Lorraine had accurately gauged his son's character, and had predicted that he would fall in an attempt to subvert the kingdom.

[2] It was probably to the skill of Castelan that Catherine de' Medici owed her recovery from the fever with which she was attacked at Metz, some months previously.

such base ingratitude, never stirred from my bedside night or day, attending to my wants as officiously as if we had been at the period of our warmest affection. As I had my mouth closed by command, I could only reply to his hypocrisy by sighs—as Burrhus did to Nero, whilst dying by the poison which that tyrant had administered—showing him plainly enough that my illness had been caused by the contagion of slander and not by that of infected air." At length, the princess's vigorous constitution triumphed over the disease, and when the Court quitted Saint-Jean d'Angely, after its surrender at the beginning of December 1569, she was sufficiently recovered to accompany it.

At Angers, whither they proceeded, they found the Duc de Guise and his uncles, which, Marguerite assures us, occasioned her intense mortification, "as it gave colour to her brother's inventions." However, Anjou, since the beginning of his sister's illness, had treated her in a most affectionate manner, and now, so far from throwing any obstacles in the way of Marguerite's intimacy with Guise, used to bring him to her apartments almost every day "and would often exclaim, embracing him: 'Would to God you were my brother!'"

It is very improbable that Guise allowed himself to be deceived by this perfidious show of friendship, for he could hardly fail to be aware of the profound aversion which Anjou already entertained for him. From early boyhood the young prince had cherished against the House of Lorraine, whose ambition and audacity he had instinctively divined, those sentiments of hatred and jealousy which, nineteen years later, were to culminate in the tragedy of Blois, and the youthful head of the family was the object of his special antipathy. He had been intensely

irritated by the duke's studied disregard of his orders during the war, by the applause which had greeted his exploits on the day of Jarnac, which, in his vanity, he imagined ought to have been reserved for himself, and, still more, by the enthusiasm aroused by his defence of Poitiers. Moreover, the pale, thin, black-haired prince could not but feel whenever he beheld this blonde giant, a galling sense of his own inferiority—inferiority in courage, both moral and physical, in intellect and ability ; in every accomplishment—with the possible exception of dancing—and, worst of all, in personal appearance ; for had not the Duchesse de Retz declared that "those Lorraine princes had such an air of distinction that other princes appeared plebeian beside them."

But Marguerite smiled on the handsome young duke and, if the latter had his suspicions as to Anjou's motives, he was careful not to permit them to be seen and, in the meanwhile, gladly availed himself of every opportunity of paying his court to the princess. That Marguerite was completely fascinated by her brilliant admirer admits, as we have said elsewhere, of no possible doubt, notwithstanding her protestations to the contrary. "She had lodged all the affections of her heart in this prince, who possessed such attractive qualities," writes Dupleix. That Guise loved her is not quite so certain. Some two years earlier, it had been reported that he was paying marked attention to Catherine de Clèves [1] the widow of Antoine de Cröy, Prince de Porcien ; [2] but whether or not the image

[1] She was one of the three daughters of François de Clèves, Duc de Nevers.

[2] The Prince de Porcien was one of the leaders of the Huguenot party, and entertained the most violent hatred of the Guises. On his death-bed, he is said to have thus addressed his wife : "You are young, beautiful and rich ; you will have many suitors when I am gone. I

HENRI DE LORRAINE, DUC DE GUISE

From an Engraving by Le Blond, *in the British Museum*

Voicy l'Amour du peuple & la paix de l'Eglise
Voicy ce Mars heureux qui sous le nom de Guyze
La gloire des françois la peur des estrangers
A faict armer la terre et trembler l'univers.

of this lady had been effaced by Marguerite's superior charms, it had ever been the practice of his family to subordinate their affections to their interests ; and, we may be sure, that he played the lover well enough to satisfy the most exacting maiden. Several historians have hinted that Marguerite had been the duke's mistress;[1] but though there is no doubt that at a later period she lived a very dissolute life, nothing authorises such a supposition. The laws of etiquette, as one of her biographers very justly remarks, were far too severe to render it possible for a Daughter of France, especially one watched by a prudent and suspicious mother, to commit such a fault ; while it is in the last degree improbable that Henri de Lorraine, who aspired to the princess's hand, would have entertained the thought of dishonouring her.[2]

The young duke's pretensions found a warm supporter in his uncle, the Cardinal de Lorraine ; indeed, it is not improbable that that scheming prelate had himself suggested the idea of such a marriage to his nephew. Nor were these pretensions nearly so exorbitant as may as first sight appear. Guise and his brothers, though, of course, ranking below the Princes of the Blood, took precedence of all the nobility, with the exception of the

have no objection to your marrying again, if only it be not the Duc de Guise. Let not my worst enemy inherit what, of all my possessions, I have cherished the most."

[1] *Elle* (*Marguerite*) *avait eu avec lui* (*Guise*) *des privautés plus grands qu'il ne fallait.*—Davila (French translation). The same historian declares that "their intimacy was so public that there was even a report that they had contracted a secret marriage ; but if this had been the case, we should certainly have heard something about it at the time of Marguerite's divorce from Henri IV."

[2] Imbert de Saint-Amand, *Les femmes de la Cour des derniers Valois.*

Montmorencies, by virtue of their descent from Louis XII. through Rénée de France, Duchess of Ferrara, whose daughter Anne d'Este had married François de Lorraine. Moreover, though the Daughters of France were destined to be the consorts of kings and foreign princes, vassals of the Crown had occasionally been honoured with their hands. Thus, the Comte de Foix had married Madeleine de France, daughter of Charles VII., while, to cite a more recent instance, Marguerite's elder sister, Claude, had married Charles II., Duke of Lorraine, head of the elder branch of the family.

However that may be, the prospect of such an alliance was very far from calculated to commend itself to the Valois. Quite apart from the fact that the duke's marriage with Marguerite would have destroyed the equilibrium between the great nobles of the realm, which it was Catherine de' Medici's chief object to maintain, and restored to the ambitious Lorraine princes a great part of the influence which they had wielded with such disastrous results in the previous reign, negotiations had been for some time past in progress for the marriage of the princess to Dom Sebastian, the young King of Portugal. It is, therefore, not a little singular that so shrewd a politician as the Cardinal de Lorraine should have encouraged his nephew in a course which had so small a prospect of success, and could hardly fail to provoke the greatest resentment in the Royal Family.

During the spring of 1570, Marguerite and the Duc de Guise met constantly, and by May the intimacy had gone so far that it had become the chief topic of conversation at the Court; and the Spanish ambassador wrote to Philip II. that "there was nothing talked of publicly in France but the marriage of Madame Marguerite with

the Duc de Guise;" [1] while the Cardinal de Lorraine told the Legate that "the principal persons concerned were already agreed," and boasted openly that the head of the elder branch of his family had married the elder sister, and the head of the younger should have the younger.

These injudicious words were repeated to the Queen-Mother, who went to visit the cardinal, who was ill in bed, and angrily demanded an explanation. The prelate, perceiving in which quarter the wind sat, protested that he had been misrepresented, but without convincing Catherine, who departed in a very ill-humour. However Guise, encouraged secretly by Marguerite, declined to abandon the field and, thanks to the complacency of the Comtesse de Mirandole, one of the Queen's ladies of honour, carried on a correspondence with the princess. Marguerite added some very affectionate lines in her own handwriting to the letters which the duke received from Madame de Mirandole, and the duke replied not less tenderly. About the middle of June 1570, one of these epistles was intercepted by Du Guast, who carried it in triumph to the Duc d'Anjou, who, in turn, laid it before the Queen-Mother and Charles IX. Catherine immediately sent for her daughter, reproached her bitterly with her conduct, and ordered her to break off all intercourse with the duke, who, together with his brother, the Duc de Mayenne, was forbidden to approach her; while the Cardinals de Lorraine and de Guise received a peremptory order to give public denial to the rumours of a betrothal between their nephew and the princess.

As for Charles IX., his resentment, on learning the news, was so artfully inflamed by the insinuations of

[1] *Bibliothèque Nationale, Coll. Simancas*, cited by Bouillé, *Histoire des Ducs de Guise*, iii. 28.

Anjou that he ended by falling into one of those violent fits of excitement hardly distinguishable from actual insanity to which he was subject. Vowing that nothing but Guise's blood could atone for his intolerable presumption, he sent for his half-brother, Henri d'Angoulême, Grand Prior of France,[1] and, when he appeared, pointed to two swords and exclaimed: "You see those two swords; one is to kill you, if to-morrow, when I go to the chase, you do not kill the Duc de Guise!"[2]

The Grand Prior, though he had little stomach for the business, being well aware that the duke's death would most speedily be followed by his own, if not at the hands of some of the murdered nobleman's friends, then at those of the Paris mob, dared not refuse the commission; and it was arranged that on the morrow he and some trusty retainers should surround Guise on his return from the chase, and, under the pretext of some dispute, poniard him.

But when the morrow came, M. d'Angoulême's courage would appear to have failed him, or possibly his intended victim gave him no opportunity of putting his amiable design into execution. Any way, the King learned, on his return to the Louvre, that the duke had reached Paris safe and sound.

Furious at the failure of the plot, Charles sent for his half-brother, bitterly reproached him with his cowardice, and repeated his orders, accompanied by terrible threats. Angoulême promised obedience, and laid more than one ambush for the duke; but the latter, warned secretly by d'Entragues, one of the King's confidants, according to

[1] He was the son of Henri II. and a Scotch girl named Fleming.

[2] Mongez, *Histoire de Marguerite de Valois*, p. 31.

Mongez, by Marguerite herself, according to another version, kept to his hôtel, and all the Grand Prior's schemes came to nothing.

In the meanwhile, Marguerite, who knew her family too well to hope that they would ever sacrifice their political calculations for the sake of her happiness, and was, besides, greatly alarmed for the safety of the man she loved, had bethought her of a means of putting an end to this critical situation. Accordingly, she wrote to her sister Claude, who, by her marriage with Charles II. of Lorraine, had become a relative of the Guises, begging her to use her influence with the duke to persuade him to appease the King's anger, by renouncing forthwith all pretensions to her hand and, as a pledge of his good faith, to place a barrier between them by contracting a marriage with his old love, Catherine de Clèves, Princesse de Porcien.

Recognising from the tone of her sister's letter, that there was not a moment to be lost, the Duchess of Lorraine at once set out for Paris, where she sought out Guise's mother, who had married, *en secondes noces*, the Duc de Nemours, and communicated to her the contents of the princess's letter. Madame de Nemours was not slow to perceive the danger of the situation in which her son's imprudence had placed him, and that the course suggested by Marguerite was the only one now open to him, and she joined Madame Claude in urging it upon the duke in the strongest possible terms.

An incident which had just occurred lent additional force to their arguments. One night there was a ball at the Louvre, at which Guise, in virtue of his office of Grand Master of the Royal Household, had been compelled to appear. It was the first time he had been seen

in public since the hunting-party which had been chosen for his assassination. Near the entrance to the ball-room he encountered the King, who laid his hand on his sword and, in an angry tone, inquired what he was doing there. Guise replied he had come to serve his Majesty. "I have no need of your services," replied the King, livid with passion. The duke made a profound obeisance and retired. His disgrace could not have been indicated in a more significant manner, and convinced that banishment from the Court and the loss of his offices, if not a worse fate awaited him, unless he bowed to the storm, he yielded to the entreaties of his mother and the counsels of the Duchess of Lorraine; and shortly afterwards his betrothal to the Princesse de Porcien was announced.

The duke's submission, as had been anticipated, had the effect of appeasing the wrath of the King. Guise was restored to favour, and when the marriage took place, early in the following October, Charles presented the happy pair with a dowry of 100,000 livres. Anjou, however, whose hatred of the duke grew every day more bitter, was not so easily disarmed, and remarked one day to some of his favourites that, "in case the Duc de Guise should cast his eyes on her (Marguerite), he would proclaim him a renegade and a miscreant, if he did not poniard him to the heart and make him bite the ground."

Thus ended the first romance of Marguerite de Valois's life. How different would have been the course of that life had she been permitted to yield to her inclinations and to marry the one man whom she seems to have loved with a passion equal to that which she often inspired! How different, too, in all probability, would have been the

course of French history! Certain it is that to the treacherous part played in this affair by the future Henri III. may be traced the bitter hatred with which Guise henceforth regarded him and most of the disasters of the succeeding reign.

CHAPTER IV

Negotiations for Marguerite's marriage with Dom Sebastian of Portugal—Conduct of Philip II. of Spain—Opposition of Dom Sebastian's advisers to the match—Project of marriage between Marguerite and Henri of Navarre—Peace of Saint-Germain—Question of the good faith of Charles IX. and Catherine de' Medici in this matter considered—Negotiations between the Court and Jeanne d'Albret in regard to the marriage of Marguerite to her son—The Huguenot leaders and the Council of Navarre overcome the Queen's objections to the match.

We have said that one of the chief reasons for the hostility of the Royal Family to the pretensions of the Duc de Guise was the fact that negotiations had been, for some time, in progress for an alliance between Marguerite of Valois and Dom Sebastian, the young King of Portugal.[1] This project dated back to the time of François II., when Nicot, the French Ambassador at Lisbon, had made the first overture and remitted to Dom Sebastian a portrait of the little princess, with which the King appears to have been greatly impressed.[2] In July

[1] According to Hilarion de Coste, the Emperor Maximilian II. had demanded Marguerite's hand for his son Rudolph, King of Hungary; but if the Emperor had made any such overture, it is strange that the princess should have failed to mention it in her *Mémoires*. It is certain, however, that there had been some talk of an alliance between Marguerite and Don Carlos, the heir to the Spanish throne, whose death, in 1568, put an end to the project.

[2] "Madame's portrait," wrote Nicot to the Queen-Mother, "has so

1569, Dom Sebastian being then seventeen, serious negotiations were opened, and Fourquevaux, the French Ambassador in Spain, received the necessary powers to treat of the marriage with Philip II., uncle of the young King of Portugal, who exercised a kind of protectorate over his nephew's kingdom. Philip appeared at first well disposed; while the project was received with warm approbation by Pius V., whose aim it was to bring about a closer union between the Catholic Powers, in order to oppose their united forces to the aggressions of the Turk and the extension of Protestantism; and the Portuguese Ambassador at Madrid informed Fourquevaux that he only awaited his instructions from Lisbon to conclude the matter.

However, these instructions did not arrive, and, on September 5, Fourquevaux sought an audience of Philip and asked for an explanation of the delay. Philip attributed it to the plague, which was then raging in Lisbon, and which, he supposed, was retarding the despatch of State, as well as of ordinary, business. The Ambassador curbed his impatience for a week, and then again approached the King. This time his Majesty ascribed the delay to the fact that the Portuguese Council of State was composed of young men, "not one of whom understood the way in which to treat of the said marriage"; and Fourquevaux retired very dissatisfied.

In the light of subsequent events, there can be no possible doubt that Philip II., in spite of his protestations of good-will, was opposed to the marriage, and probably did all in his power to hinder it, although no evidence of

pleased those of this Court that nothing could possibly be better. I have been informed that, so soon as the King saw it, he kissed and hugged it, and that since then he has declined to part with it."

any active intervention on his part exists. The marriage of Dom Sebastian was a matter of supreme importance to his kingdom, for the only male heir of the House of Aviz was his great-uncle Cardinal Dom Henry, and the death of Dom Sebastian and of the Cardinal without direct heirs would inevitably be followed by a civil war, arising from the disputed succession. In that eventuality, Philip himself, who had long coveted possession of his little neighbour, fully intended to come forward as a claimant to the throne,[1] and he had, therefore, no mind that his nephew should have a wife, least of all, a French wife, who, even if she were to bear her husband no children, would give France an excellent excuse for intervening in the affairs of Portugal.

As for Dom Sebastian, who was already dreaming of that disastrous crusade which was to cost him his own life and strike a last and final blow at the declining power of Portugal,[2] the question of his marriage, and of all that it meant to his kingdom, seems to have troubled him very little. Moreover, although the towns of Portugal, when consulted, had, with two exceptions, pronounced in favour of the marriage with Marguerite, the king's advisers were by no means so unanimous. "Some say," writes Fourquevaux to Catherine de' Medici, "that he is likely to have children; others judge him incapable and dissuade him from marriage; for to marry would be to shorten his life. All are in accord in believing that he will not live."[3]

[1] Philip II. was accepted by the Portuguese Cortes as King on April 3, 1581.

[2] Dom Sebastian fell at the Battle of El-Kasîr-el-Kebîr, usually spelt Alcazar Quibir, in Morocco, August 4, 1578.

[3] In the same despatch, the Ambassador gives the Queen some interesting details concerning Dom Sebastian: "He is sixteen or seventeen

But the most serious opposition to the marriage came from two Theatine monks, nephews of the Cardinal of Portugal, who exercised an absolute dominion over the mind of the young sovereign, and "had great fear of losing their credit, if the king were once married to Madame Marguerite." Pius V. who, as we have already mentioned, was extremely anxious for the match, despatched a special envoy, Don Loys de Torres, to Lisbon, bearing a letter from his Holiness to Dom Sebastian, urging him to conclude the matter. But the influence of the monks was too strong, and the mission failed. "They have made the King conceive a perfect horror of women," said the disgusted Don Loys to Fourquevaux, as he passed through Madrid on his return journey to Italy. "It is they alone who stand in the way of the marriage."

His patience exhausted, Charles IX. wrote to Fourquevaux: "If there is a prince who has the right to complain, it is I, who see myself so unworthily treated, inasmuch as they do not desire to hold to the promise they have made me." And, after expressing his opinion that Philip himself and not his nephew's entourage was responsible for all the delay, he ordered Fourquevaux to acquaint his Catholic Majesty that he was gravely displeased at the continued delay and to demand an immediate explanation, as, in the event of its proving unsatisfactory, he "proposed to dispose of his sister's hand elsewhere."

In the meanwhile the Peace of Saint-Germain,[1] which

years of age; he is fair and stout; he is thought to be untrustworthy, bizarre, obstinate, and of the humour of the late Don Carlos [*i.e.*, half-mad] . . . he has been brought up *à la portuguaise*, that is to say, nourished on superstitions and vanities.

[1] This peace was wittily called "*Paix bôiteuse et malassise*," from the

brought to a close the third civil war, and granted far greater concessions to the Huguenots than they could possibly have hoped for after the disasters of Jarnac and Montcontour, had been concluded (August 1570), and had given great umbrage both to Philip II. and Dom Sebastian, like his uncle, one of the most bigoted of Catholics. The crafty Philip, we may well suppose, had not failed to represent to his nephew the undesirability of his allying himself with a house which had shown itself so lukewarm in its opposition to heresy; and, in October 1570, the Court of Lisbon replied that the King was too young to marry, and that Madame Marguerite was well able to wait.

Charles IX. and the Queen-Mother were not of this opinion. "A few days later," writes Marguerite, "there was a talk of my marriage to the Prince of Navarre, who is now our worthy and magnanimous king.[1] The Queen my mother, discussed it one day at table for a long time with M. de Méru,[2] the members of the House of Montmorency having been the first to suggest it. Upon rising from the table, he told me that she had requested him to

royal plenipotentiaries who concluded it; Biron, who was lame, and de Mesmes, seigneur de Malassiss.

[1] This project was by no means a new one; indeed, it is said that almost from the infancy of Henri of Navarre and Marguerite, the Court of France had dreamed of their future union. Favyn, in his *Histoire de Navarre*, relates that the little prince, when five years old, was presented by his father to King Henri II., who, delighted with his precocity, inquired if he would be his son. Turning towards Antoine de Bourbon, the child replied in his Bearnais dialect: "*Quet es lo peign pay!* (This is Monsieur my father!)" The King, pleased with the jargon, asked him: "Since you will not be my son, will you be my son-in-law?" To which the little prince replied promptly: "*O be!* Yes, willingly!"

[2] Charles de Montmorency, third son of the Constable, afterwards Duc d'Amville and Admiral of France.

speak to me about it. I told him that it was unnecessary, since I had no will but her own, although she should certainly take into account how thorough a Catholic I was, and that it would distress me exceedingly to marry any one who was not of my religion. Afterwards, the Queen, having retired to her cabinet, sent for me and told me that Messieurs de Montmorency had suggested this marriage to her, and that she greatly desired to ascertain my views. I replied that I had neither will nor choice save her own, but that I implored her to remember that I was a good Catholic."[1] The question of religion, we may presume, troubled the princess a good deal less than she would have us believe; she had no inclination for Henry of Navarre, nor did a closer acquaintance bring any change in her disposition towards him. However, Catherine's pretence of consulting her daughter's feelings was a mere formality, since both she and the King had decided that a marriage between Marguerite and Henri of Navarre was absolutely essential to the success of their policy.

What that policy was, has been the subject of interminable discussion. Had the war just concluded been a series of triumphs for the Huguenots, instead of a campaign of disaster, which, but for the courage and skill of Coligny, might have been followed by the irretrievable ruin of their cause, the concessions granted them by the Peace of Saint-Germain could hardly have been greater. They received a general amnesty and the restoration of their confiscated estates. They were granted free exercise of their religion, save in Paris and the royal residences. They were admitted upon equal

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard, 1842).

rights with their Roman Catholic fellow-subjects to the benefit of all public institutions and declared eligible to fill every post in the State. They were permitted to appeal from the judgment of the notoriously hostile Parlement of Toulouse to the Cour des Requêtes in Paris. Finally, they were permitted to retain possession of four towns which they had conquered: La Rochelle, Cognac, La Charité, and Montauban, as a guarantee of his Majesty's good faith, on condition that the Prince of Navarre and Condé bound themselves to restore them to the Crown, two years after the faithful execution of this edict of pacification.

Many historians, Catholic as well as Protestant, see in this peace the snare which gathered the victims for the St. Bartholomew. "A peace of such a nature," says the Jesuit writer, Louis Maimbourg, "was not in reality contemplated by Catherine de' Medici. This princess had her designs in reserve, and she only granted the Huguenots what they demanded in order to deceive them and to surprise those on whom she desired to be avenged, and particularly the Admiral [Coligny], on the first favourable opportunity." Such, too, is the opinion of Père Daniel, of Papyre Masson, the historian of Charles IX., of Fauriel, who denounces it as "the obvious product of the blackest deceit and treachery,"[1] of Davila, and of Sully. On the other hand, Ranke, the Protestant writer Schoeffer, Coquerel, Daniel Ramée, the author of *les Noces vermeilles*, and M. Georges Gandy, whose erudite study in the *Revue des Questions historiques* (1866), though disfigured here and there by religious prejudice, is one or the ablest summaries of the question we have read, are

[1] *Essai sur les Evénements qui ont préparé et amené le Sainte-Barthélemy.*

persuaded that Catherine and Charles IX. were sincere in their desire to pacify the realm.

The evidence which M. Gandy cites leaves, we think, no doubt about the matter. He points to Charles IX.'s repeated expression of a desire for a continuance of the peace and of his determination to enforce the edicts of toleration contained in his letter to Mandelot, Governor of Lyons, and La Mothe Fénelon, the French Ambassador in England ; to the King's response to the Ambassadors who came to compliment him on his marriage with Elizabeth of Austria, when " he felicitated himself on the peace which God had re-established in his realm . . . since there was nothing in this world which he had so much at heart, nor would more constantly strive for than to endeavour to bring about and to observe peace, union, and tranquillity among his subjects, as the true and only means of securing the prosperity of kingdoms and states " (December 23, 1570) ; to the exemplary punishment of those Catholics who transgressed the edict ; and to the many concessions which were granted the Huguenots between the peace and the St. Bartholomew : the permission to retain possession of La Rochelle after the two years mentioned at Saint-Germain had expired, the withdrawal of the royal garrison from the towns of the South, the taking away of their arms from the bourgeois militia, and the payment of 150,000 écus to the German Reiters who had ravaged France as their allies.

Again, if we look at the foreign policy of France at this time, we find it altogether favourable to the Huguenots, Catherine endeavoured to negotiate, first, the marriage of the Duc d'Anjou and, afterwards, that of the young Duc d'Alençon with Elizabeth of England, as the counterpart

of the union of her daughter with Henri of Navarre; while the relations of France with Germany, Flanders, and Spain all indicate a policy of conciliation.

Finally, it should be borne in mind that the Peace of 1570 was really the work of the Third Party—the *Politiques* as they were called—whose leaders, Montmorency, Cosséo, and Biron, sympathised with many of the aspirations of the Huguenots and were extremely hostile to the Guises; that it was bitterly resented by the Guises and the High Catholic party, by the Pope and by Philip II. Pius V., writing to the Cardinal de Lorraine, speaks of the negotiations as infamous. "We cannot refrain from tears," he concludes, "as we think how deplorable the peace is to all good men, how full of danger, and what a scource of bitter regret." And Philip II. offered to send Charles a force of 9000 men to continue the war. Had it been nothing but a snare, surely these potentates would have been in the secret!

The hand of Marguerite was intended to consolidate the peace; to flatter the Huguenots and allay their suspicions, while, at the same time, weakening their power of offence, by bringing their nominal chief directly under Catherine's own influence. From the beginning of 1571, active negotiations were carried on between the Court and the Huguenot stronghold of La Rochelle, and Biron, Cossé, and Castelnau were in turn despatched thither to confer with Henri's mother, Jeanne d'Albret, and the Protestant leaders. Jeanne d'Albret received the overtures of the Court with mixed feelings. She was intensely ambitious for her idolised son and desirous of doing everything in her power to promote the interests of her party. But she hated Catherine and all the Valois, and entertained the most profound distrust of their professions

of friendship; and had the decision rested with her alone, the proffered alliance would most certainly have been rejected. However, the Huguenot leaders were practically unanimous in urging her to consent; Coligny, who had divined the growing greatness of the young prince, and augured much from the favour with which Charles IX. had always regarded him, was particularly insistent on the advantages which the party and the kingdom generally would derive from the match; and ultimately, after long deliberation, the Queen agreed to proceed to Pau and submit the matter to her Council of State.

There can be no doubt that Jeanne hoped that the nobility of her little kingdom would take a less favourable view of the project than the leaders of the party. But, carried away by the eloquence of the Chancellor, Francœur, who had been won over by the representations of Coligny and the promises of the Court, they pronounced with one accord for the marriage; and the prince himself joined in entreating the Queen to assent to the alliance and to accept Charles IX.'s invitation to proceed to Blois, where the Court then was, to settle the preliminaries.

Finding further resistance impossible, Jeanne signified her assent, though with a very bad grace—"*Hélas! je compte peu d'amis*" she is reported to have said, on perceiving how entirely the opinion of her advisers was against her—and wrote forthwith to the King to announce her approaching departure for Blois. At the same time, no argument could induce her to permit her son to visit the Court, until his marriage with Marguerite had been finally arranged and the contract signed; while she directed Biron, who had come to Pau to add his persuasions to

those of her councillors, to inform his Majesty that she absolutely declined to sanction the celebration of the marriage in Paris, whose inhabitants, to use her own expression, were "*peuples mutins, ennemis d'elle et des siens.*"[1]

Well would it have been for the Huguenots had the far-sighted Queen persisted in this decision!

[1] Freer, *Jeanne d'Albret.*

CHAPTER V

Jeanne d'Albret's journey to Blois—The King of Portugal, through Cardinal Alessandrino, demands the hand of Marguerite—His alliance declined by Charles IX.—Catherine de' Medici and Marguerite visit the Queen of Navarre at Tours —Favourable impression which Jeanne forms of the princess —Conference between Jeanne and the Queen-Mother—Cordial welcome accorded the Queen of Navarre, by Charles IX., on her arrival at the Court—She resumes her negotiations with Catherine—Her letter to Henri of Navarre—She forbids him to follow her to Blois—Brantôme's description of Marguerite of Valois's appearance in the procession on Palm Sunday, 1572—The negotiations between Jeanne and the Queen-Mother at a deadlock—Jeanne consults the Huguenot divines and the English Ambassadors—Letter of Walsingham to Burleigh—A commission appointed to settle the points in dispute—The King announces his intention to discard all conditions—Refusal of Pope Pius V. to grant the necessary dispensation for the marriage of Henri and Marguerite—Terms of the marriage-treaty—Jeanne d'Albret reluctantly consents to the ceremony being performed in Paris—Difficulties raised by Gregory XIII., Pius V.'s successor, in regard to the granting of the dispensation—Demands of the Calvinistic divines concerning the ceremonial to be observed at the marriage acceded to by Charles IX.—The Queen of Navarre sets out for Paris.

THE Queen left Pau, early in January 1572, and proceeded to Nérac, to which she had summoned an assembly of Huguenot nobles to confer with her. She next visited Lectoure, the capital of her county of

Armagnac, recently restored to her by Charles IX., to receive a renewed oath of fidelity from its inhabitants. Here she remained for some days, and then, having taken an affectionate farewell of her son, whom she was never to see again, she continued her journey northwards, accompanied by her daughter Catherine, then aged thirteen, Biron, Louis Count of Nassau, brother of William of Orange, and a number of Protestant nobles, amongst whom were Rohan, La Rochefoucauld, Téligny, La Noue, and Rosny, the father of the celebrated Duc de Sully. Between Poitiers and Tours she was overtaken by Cardinal Alessandrino, the Pope's nephew, despatched by Pius V. on a special mission to Charles IX., who insolently traversed the Queen's train, without bestowing upon her the customary salutation, "deeming it a crime and an impiety to offer any greeting to an excommunicated person." The cardinal has been charged by his uncle to remonstrate in the strongest possible terms against the marriage of his Most Christian Majesty's sister with the son of so determined a heretic and, at the same time, to exhort Charles to return a favourable answer to the suit of the King of Portugal. Thanks to the exertions of Pius V., alarmed beyond measure at the rumours of the projected marriage between Marguerite and Henri of Navarre, the views of Dom Sebastian in regard to the French princess had during the last three months undergone a remarkable change; and whereas, in the previous October, he had practically declined the alliance, he was now intensely anxious for its conclusion. Cardinal Alessandrino, who had journeyed from Lisbon, was, in fact, the bearer of a letter from the young sovereign to Charles IX., wherein he even offered to accept the hand of Marguerite without a dowry, pro-

JEANNE D'ALBRET, QUEEN OF NAVARRE

From an Engraving after a Drawing attributed to FRANÇOIS CLOUET, *in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris*

vided that the king would join the Holy League which the Pope was then forming against the Turks.[1]

Charles IX. received the cardinal very graciously, but positively declined the Portuguese alliance, remarking that urgent reasons of State obliged him to conclude the marriage of his sister with the Prince of Navarre. To console the Legate, who could not conceal his chagrin at the failure of his mission, the King drew a magnificent diamond ring from his finger and begged him to accept it, "as a pledge of his esteem for his person and of his attachment to the Holy See"; but Alessandrino was compelled to decline, on the ground that the Pope had expressly forbidden him to accept any presents from sovereigns to whom he was accredited.[2]

On her arrival at Tours, the Queen of Navarre was met by a messenger from Charles IX., who begged her to defer her visit to Blois until after the departure of the Legate, and offered her her choice between the Citadel of Tours and the Château of Plessis for a residence. Jeanne preferred to remain at Tours, where, day or two later, she was visited by Catherine de' Medici, Marguerite, the widowed Princesse de Condé, and her future daughter-in-law, Marie de Clèves, and other ladies of the Court. Marguerite seems to have made a highly favourable impression upon the Queen of Navarre, who wrote to her son: "Madame Marguerite has paid me every honour and welcome in her power to

[1] Letter of Dom Sebastian to Pius V., December 20, 1571, cited by M. de Saint-Poncy, *Histoire de Marguerite de Valois, Reine de France et de Navarre.*

[2] According to Davila, the Legate gave a very different reason for his refusal, namely, that "as his Majesty had so unexpectedly deviated from his zeal for the Catholic religion, his most precious jewels were no more than dirt in the estimation of all good Catholics."

bestow; and she has frankly owned to me the favourable impression which she has formed of you.[1] With her beauty and wit, she exercises a great influence over the Queen-Mother and the King, and Messieurs her younger brothers." [2]

The following day, the conferences between Jeanne and Catherine respecting the marriage articles began. "What a contrast between these two women!" remarks La Ferrière. "Catherine, with the big eyes of the Medici, whose vivacity was tempered by a flash of Gallic raillery, impudently denying in the morning what she had said or promised the evening before; and Jeanne, with her austere, ascetic countenance and thin lips, whose smile her cold Calvinism had frozen; absolute, authoritative, impassive in appearance, and yet concealing at the bottom of her heart ferocious passions." [3]

This marriage, settled in principle, presented in the execution considerable difficulties and raised many thorny questions. A mixed marriage was, at this period, a very unusual occurrence, particularly on the steps of the throne, hitherto so closely united with the Church. In the sphere of crowned heads only one instance could be

[1] Marguerite, in saying this, was probably acting under her mother's instructions, for, according to Davila, she declared to her intimate friends that she "would never resign herself willingly to the loss of the Duc de Guise, to whom she had given her affections and her faith, neither would she of her own free will accept for a husband the duke's greatest enemy."

[2] At the same time, little Catherine de Bourbon wrote to her brother: "Monsieur,—I have seen Madame, whom I think very beautiful and I greatly wish you could see her too. I talked well to her of you, and asked her to hold you in her greatest favour, which she promised me to do. She gave me a very cordial welcome and has given me a beautiful little dog, that I love much (*un bau petit chien que jeme bien*)."

[3] *Trois amoureuses du XVI^e siècle : Marguerite de Valois.*

cited : that of Marie Stuart and Bothwell. It was not an encouraging one ![1]

The two royal ladies were soon at variance. Jeanne proposed that her son should be married by proxy, and that, after the ceremony, she should conduct Marguerite to her husband at Pau. This was indignantly vetoed by Catherine, who demanded : First, that the bridegroom should attend in person and that, after the marriage, the young couple should reside for at least a portion of each year at the French Court. Secondly, that Marguerite should not be compelled to attend the prayers, or *prêches*, of the Huguenots, but that, wherever she went, her husband should provide her with a chapel, priests, and other requisites for the celebration of Mass. Thirdly, that the Prince of Navarre should refrain from the public exercise of his religion while at Court.

It was now the Queen of Navarre's turn to be indignant, and she declared that nothing would induce her to accept these conditions. Indeed, had it not been for the belief that Catherine was seeking to impose upon her merely her own wishes and not, as she asserted, those of the King, she would have cut short the negotiations there and then ; a course to which she was strongly urged by Rosny, who added : " Believe me, Madame, that if these nuptials are ever celebrated in Paris, the liveries worn will be blood-coloured ! "

The Legate having taken his departure, Jeanne proceeded to Blois, where she was received with every imaginable honour and overwhelmed with caresses by Charles IX., who called her "*sa bonne tante, son tout, sa mieux amie.*" Her presence assured the triumph of

[1] Comte Léo de Saint-Poncy, *Marguerite de Valois, Reine de France et de Navarre*, i. 111.

Coligny, who had returned to the Court from which he had been so long exiled in the previous September, and had already gained a great influence over the mind of the impressionable King, as well as over that of his younger brother Alençon, who seems to have been completely fascinated by the genius of the intrepid soldier. "Perhaps," remarks M. de Saint-Poncy, "it was Coligny who first implanted in that weak and unstable mind those seditious seeds which were later to bear fruit."

The two Queens resumed their interrupted conferences, but, as neither would give way an inch, the affair made little or no progress, and Jeanne complains bitterly to her son of the manner in which she is being treated, and particularly of the care which is taken to prevent her having private interviews with Marguerite; while she is inexpressibly shocked at the morals of the Court.

"JEANNE D'ALBRET *to* HENRI OF NAVARRE.

"*Mon fils*,—I am forced to negotiate quite contrary to my expectations and their promises. I am no longer at liberty to speak to Madame Marguerite even, but only to the Queen-Mother, *qui me traite à la fourche*, as my messenger will inform you. As for *Monsieur* (the Duc d'Anjou), he likewise endeavours to domineer, though in a very courteous manner, half in jest, half by deceit. As for Madame (Marguerite), I only see her in the Queen's apartments, from which she never stirs, and she never returns to her own chamber, except during those hours when it is impossible for me to visit her. She is always attended by Madame de Curton (her *gouvernante*), so that it is impossible for me to utter a word which the latter does not hear. I have not yet shown Madame your letter, but she shall see it. I spoke to her, and she

is very discreet, and replied, in general terms, of obedience to you and to myself, in the event of her becoming your wife.

". . . I approve of your letter and will present it to Madame on the first opportunity. As for her picture, I will send to Paris and secure one for you. She is beautiful, discreet, and graceful; but she has been reared in the midst of the most vicious and corrupt society that ever existed. No one that I see here is exempt from its evil influences, your cousin [the Marquise de Villars] is so greatly changed that she exhibits no sign of religion; if it be not that she abstains from attending Mass (!); for in all else, save that she refrains from this idolatry, she conducts herself like other Papists, and my sister *Madame la Princesse* sets an even worse example. This I write you in confidence. The bearer of this letter will tell you how the King emancipates himself; it is a pity. I would not for any consideration in the world that you should abide here. For this reason, I desire to see you married, that you and your wife may withdraw yourselves from this corruption; for, although I believed it to be very great, it surpasses my anticipation. Here it is not the men who solicit the women, but the women the men. If you were here, you would never escape, save by some remarkable mercy of God. I send you a favour to wear beneath your ear, since you are now for sale, and some studs for your cap.

". . . I entreat you to pray earnestly to God, for you have great need of Him at all times, and that He will help you. And I pray to Him for it, and that He will give you, my son, what you desire. From Blois, from your good mother and best friend

"(Signed) JEANNE."

"Since writing the above, finding no means of delivering your letter to Madame (Marguerite), I have repeated to her its contents. She made answer that, before these negotiations began, you were well aware of the religion that she professed and of her devotion to it. I told her that those who had made the first overtures had represented the matter very differently and that, had it not been for this conviction, I should not have consented to the marriage; nevertheless, while it was yet time, I besought her to reflect well. At other times, when I have spoken to her on the subject, she has never answered so peremptorily and even rudely. I believe, however, Madame speaks as she has been commanded to speak; also, that the story respecting her inclination for the reformed doctrines was merely a device to lure me on to this negotiation. I never miss an opportunity to draw from her some avowal which may console me. I inquired of her this evening whether she had any message to send you. Madame for some time made no reply; but at length, upon my pressing her for an answer, she replied that "she could not send you any message without having first obtained permission; but that I was to present to you her compliments and to say you were to come to Court. But I, my son, bid you do quite the contrary."

Catherine de' Medici was, above all things, anxious to draw the young prince to Blois; as she was probably well aware that he had inherited his father's (Antoine de Bourbon's) weakness for beauty, and did not doubt that, once among the temptations of the Court, she would be able to gain his consent to concessions which she might seek in vain from his obstinate mother, if not through

the good offices of his charming bride-elect, then through those of one of the "creatures more divine than human" who formed her renowned "*escadron volant.*" Henri, however, who had the deepest veneration for his mother and implicit confidence in her sagacity, preferred to follow her instructions and remained at Pau, all the more readily that he was at this time the slave of a fair lady of the Court of Navarre, and far from disposed to leave his mistress, even for "the hunting, banqueting and other pleasures" mentioned by Charles IX., in a very pressing invitation which he despatched to him.

If Henri had followed his mother to Blois, he would have had an opportunity of seeing his bride-elect in circumstances which might have caused him to quite forget the *beaux yeux* of his mistress, for on Palm Sunday 1572, Marguerite appeared in the State procession and, if we are to believe Brantôme, ravished every one by her marvellous beauty and the sumptuousness of her attire.

"I saw her in the procession," he writes, "so beautiful that nothing in the world could be seen so fair; because, besides the beauty of her face and form, she was most superbly and most richly adorned and apparelled. Her lovely fair face, which resembled the heavens in their sweetest and calmest serenity, was adorned about the head by so great a quantity of large pearls and costly jewels and, in particular, by sparkling diamonds worn in the form of stars, that people declared that the serenity of the face and the arrangement of the jewels resembled the sky when it is very starry. Her beautiful body, with its full tall form, was robed in a gown of crinkled cloth-of-gold, the richest and most beautiful ever seen in France. The stuff was a gift made by the Grand Seigneur to M. de

Grand-Champ, on his departure from Constantinople, where he was Ambassador, it being the Grand Seigneur's custom to present to those who are sent to him by the great States a piece of the said stuff amounting to fifteen ells; which, Grand-Champ assured me, cost one hundred crowns the ell, and it was a masterpiece. He, on his coming to France, not knowing how to employ better or more worthily the gift of so rich a stuff, gave it to Madame, the sister of the king, who had it made into a gown and wore it, for the first time, that day, and very well it became her; since from one grandeur to another there is only a hand's breadth. She wore it all day, although its weight was very great; but her beautiful, full, strong figure supported it well and aided her greatly, since had she been a little dwarf of a princess or a dame only elbow-high, as I have seen some, she would assuredly have died under the weight, or else had been forced to change her gown and take another. Nor is this all, for, being in the procession, walking according to her high rank, her face uncovered, so as not to deprive the people of its kindly light, she seemed more beautiful still, by bearing everywhere in her hand a palm-branch, as our queens of all time have been wont to do, with royal majesty, with a grace, half-proud, half-sweet, and in a manner little common and so different from all the rest that whosoever had never seen her and known her would have said: 'Here is a princess who is above the run of all others in the world!' And we courtiers went about declaring with one voice boldly: 'This beautiful princess does well to bear a palm in her hand, since she bears it away from all others in the world, and surpasses them all in beauty, in grace, and in every perfection. Then I swear to you that in this procession we forgot our devotions

and did not make them, while contemplating and admiring this divine princess, who ravished us more than divine service, and yet we thought we committed no sin; for whoso contemplates and admires a divinity on earth does not offend that of Heaven, inasmuch as He made her such.' "

In the meanwhile, the negotiations between the two queens had come to an absolute deadlock, for, in addition to the points already in dispute, fresh difficulties had arisen, relative to the manner in which the marriage was to be solemnised. To discuss the momentous questions involved, Jeanne, having received the king's permission to consult whom she pleased, summoned to Blois three prominent Huguenot divines, Merlin de Vaulx, Espinosa, and Vinet, and also called into consultation the English Ambassadors, Sir Francis Walsingham and Sir Thomas Smith. Walsingham, in a despatch to Burleigh, gives the following account of the interview:

"WALSINGHAM *to* BURLEIGH.

"*Blois, May* 29, 1572.

"Since I wrote last unto your lordship, there hath fallen out nothing worthy of advertisement. The matter of the marriage between the prince of Navar [*sic*] and the Lady Marguerite continueth doubtful, whereof Sir Thomas Smith and I have more cause so to judge, for that the fourteenth of this month it pleased the Queen of Navar [*sic*] to send for us to dinner. Immediately upon our coming, she showed unto us how, with the consent of the Queen-Mother, she had sent for us (as the Ministers and Ambassadors of a Christian Princess she had sundry causes to honour) to confer with us and certain others in whom she reposed great trust, touching certain diffi-

culties that were impeachments to the marriage, which things she would communicate to us after dinner. She said to us that now she had the Woolf by the ears, for that in concluding or not concluding the marriage she saw danger every way, and that no matter did so trouble her as this, for that she could not tell how to resolve; amongst divers causes of fear, she showed unto us that two chiefly troubled her.

"The first, that the king would needs have her son and the Lady Margaret, the marriage proceeding, to be courtiers, and yet would not yield to grant him any exercise of religion; the next way to make him become an Atheist, as also thereby no hope to grow of the conversion of the Lady Margaret, for that she would not resort to any sermon.

"The second, that they would needs condition that, the Lady Margaret, remaining constant in the Catholic Faith, should have, whensoever she went to the country of Béarn, her Mass, a thing which in no wise she can consent to, having her country of Béarn cleansed from all idolatry. Besides, said she, the Lady Margaret remaining a Catholic, whensoever she shall come to remain in the country of Béarn, the Papists there will take her part, which will breed division in the country, and make her most unwilling to give ear to the gospel, having a staff to lean to. After dinner, she sent for us into her chamber, where we found a dozen others of certain Gent of the religion and their ministers. She declared briefly what had passed between the King, Queen-Mother, and her touching the marriage, as also what was the cause of the present stay of the same, wherein she desired us to severally say our opinions and sincerely, as we would answer unto God. The stay stood on three points: First,

whether she might with a good conscience substitute a Papist for her son's Proctor for the Fiansals, which was generally agreed she might. Secondly, whether the Proctor going to Mass after the Fiansals, which was expressly forbidden in his letters procuratory, would not breed an offence to the godly. It was agreed that this would be no offence. Thirdly, whether she might consent that the Fiansals might be pronounced by a Priest in his priestly attire, with his Surplice and Stole. This latter point was long debated, and for that, the Ministers concluded that the same, though it were a thing indifferent, could not but breed a general offence to the godly. She protested that she would never consent to do that thing whereof might grow any public scandal, for that she knew, she said, she would so incur God's high displeasure; upon which protestation, it was generally concluded that, in that case, she might not yield thereto, her own conscience gainsaying the same, so that now the marriage is held generally for broken. Notwithstanding, I am of the contrary opinion, and do think assuredly that hardly any cause will make them break, so many necessary causes there are that the same should proceed. By the next, I shall be able to advertise your lordship of the certainty of the marriage. . . ."[1]

Walsingham's prediction was verified. Charles IX., who was firmly resolved upon the marriage, losing patience, determined to take the negotiations out of the hands of the two queens and entrust them to a commission, half of its members to be nominated by himself and the other half by Jeanne d'Albret. The Commissioners chosen by the king were Birague, the Keeper of the Seals, Biron,

[1] Published by Bingham, "Marriages of the Bourbons," 1. 163.

the Comtes de Retz and de Mauleverier; those appointed by the Queen of Navarre were Francœur, Chancellor of Navarre, Count Louis of Nassau, La Noue, and her secretary, Le Royer. The commissioners, however, seemed no more able to agree than had the royal ladies; and, in despair, Charles suddenly declared it to be his pleasure to discard all conditions whatever and to proceed forthwith to stipulate the articles of his sister's marriage-contract, provided only that the Queen of Navarre would consent to her son coming to receive the hand of his bride in person, in place of the marriage being celebrated by procuration. The King's proposal was acceded to by Jeanne, though not, it would appear, without grave misgivings.

There still remained, however, an obstacle to be surmounted. Both Marguerite and Henri of Navarre were descended from Charles of Valois, Comte d'Angoulême, the father of François I. and were consequently cousins in the third degree, a relationship which, remote though it was, required the dispensation of the Holy See before a marriage could be contracted. This dispensation had been sought by Charles IX., through his Ambassador at the Vatican, the skilful de Marle and the French cardinals. But Pius V., who still continued to protest against a union which not only offended his conscience but threatened to ruin all his political combinations, indignantly refused it, declaring that sooner than grant dispensation of marriage to a heretic he would "lose his head."

In the meanwhile, on April 11, 1572, without waiting for the response of the Vatican, the treaty of marriage[1]

[1] This treaty has been confounded by many writers with the marriage contract, which was signed in Paris on the following August 17. The deed of April 11 was a kind of provisionary convention.

had been signed in the great hall of the Château of Blois. Charles IX. agreed to give his sister the sum of 300,000 golden écus of 54 sols tournois each, in return for which she was to renounce all her rights on the property of the family, on both her father's and her mother's side; Catherine promised her 200,000 livres and the Ducs d'Anjou and d'Alençon each 25,000 livres, which were to be employed in the purchase of Rentes on the Hôtel de Ville in Paris. But all this was never paid, it appears, or at least only a part of it. Jeanne d'Albret, on her part, covenanted to surrender to her son on his marriage the revenues of the country of Armagnac, 12,000 livres of dowry, which she had on the county of Harle, and the lands ceded to her by the Cardinal de Bourbon on her marriage with Antoine de Bourbon. She also proclaimed him her universal heir. Marguerite's dowry, in the event of her surviving her husband, was fixed at the annual sum of 40,000 livres tournois, secured on the revenue of the Duchy of Vendôme, with the Château of Vendôme, furnished, as a residence. Prince Henri, moreover, was to expend a sum of 30,000 livres in furniture and decorations for the palace of his future bride. Finally, the Cardinal de Bourbon promised his nephew the sum of 100,000 livres on the estate of Châteauneuf, in Thimerais, to renounce in his favour all the rights which belonged to him as the head of the family, and to recognise him as the real heir of the House of Bourbon.

The questions of where the marriage was to take place and the ceremonial to be observed on that occasion remained to be decided. We have seen that, at the beginning of the negotiations, Jeanne d'Albret had absolutely refused to consent to the nuptials being celebrated in

Paris, and several of the Huguenot leaders were also strongly opposed to a marriage in the capital. They knew how rancorous was the hostility of the Parisians to the reformed religion, how bitterly they resented the Peace of Saint-Germain and the growing influence of the Huguenot party, and how complete was the ascendency of the Guises over the excitable populace. To trust themselves in the midst of a city whose inhabitants regarded them with such feelings, seemed to them the height of imprudence, for, with all the good will in the world, the king might be powerless to save them, if once the frenzied fanaticism of the mob were to be aroused. However, the King and Queen-Mother had so many reasons to allege in favour of the capital that it was impossible to gainsay them. They pointed out that it was the immemorial custom of the kings of France to marry the royal princesses in the metropolis of their realm; that it would be impossible to hold the festivities proper to such an occasion in any of the royal residences except the Louvre; that to celebrate their marriage elsewhere would not only cause the greatest disappointment among the nobility, but would be deeply resented by the Parisians, who would regard it as a reflection upon their loyalty; finally, that the importance of the alliance, which was intended to proclaim to France and to all Europe that the internal dissensions which had so long distracted the realm were at length appeased, imperatively demanded that it should be solemnised in the capital and with all possible magnificence.

Very reluctantly, Jeanne yielded to their Majesties' desire; but the Huguenot chiefs proposed that, since to Paris they must go, they would proceed thither in such force as to render any attempt against them on the part

of the Guises and their partisans worse than useless. This suggestion was strongly opposed by the Queen, as being likely to provoke the very calamity which they feared ; but, after her untimely death, her wishes were disregarded ; a fatal error which, as we shall presently see, was to be fraught with the most disastrous consequences.

Towards the end of April, Pius V. died and was succeeded by Gregory XIII., a pontiff of a more pliable disposition. Nevertheless, the new Pope did not at first show himself any more favourably disposed towards the marriage than had his predecessor, for, although he promised to accord the necessary dispensation on account of relationship, it was hedged in by such restrictions and conditions as to make his consent little better than a disguised refusal. Firstly, the Prince of Navarre must make a profession of the Catholic Faith, in the presence of Charles IX. Secondly, the Prince of Navarre must himself solicit, or cause to be solicited on his behalf, the said dispensation. Thirdly, he must re-establish the Catholic clergy, both regular and secular, of his dominions in possession of all the benefices and property of which they had been deprived. Finally, the marriage must be solemnised according to the ritual of Holy Church, without any alterations whatsoever.

Charles IX. flew into a violent passion when informed of the attitude taken up by the new Pope ; and, on Jeanne d'Albret, whose health had for some time past been gradually failing, expressing a wish to retire to Vendôme, pending the settlement of the negotiations with the Holy See, exclaimed : " No, no, *ma tante ;* I honour you more than I do the Pope, and I love my sister more than I fear his Holiness. I am not a Huguenot, but neither am I a fool. If M. le Pape

conducts himself too absurdly in this affair, I promise you that I will myself take Margot by the hand and lead her to be married in full *prêche.*" [1]

On their side, the bigoted Calvinistic divines, Merlin de Vaulx, Espinosa and the rest, to whose counsel the Queen of Navarre was wont to pay so much deference, endeavoured to impose all kinds of vexatious conditions in regard to the ceremony to be observed at the marriage. They insisted that the Cardinal de Bourbon, who had been chosen by the King to perform the ceremony, "should array himself only in the vestments which the said cardinal wears on ordinary occasions, such as when he attends the Royal Council in the court of the Parlement, and that during the ceremony he should content himself with delivering the ring only to the parties, without uttering the accustomed benediction; that the Prince of Navarre, though, if he received the express commands of his Majesty, he might accompany the said Majesty into the Cathedral of Notre-Dame (the marriage, it should be mentioned, was to be celebrated on a platform erected before the portal of Notre-Dame, according to the ancient custom at the marriage of a daughter of France), should quit the cathedral before the commencement of the Romish service, by the same door as he entered, the prince taking his departure in as conspicuous a manner as possible, in the sight of all, that it may at once be most evident that he appeared there with no intention of assisting at Mass or at any other ceremony whatever;" and so forth.

The document embodying these conditions was presented to Charles IX. and the Queen-Mother by Jeanne d'Albret, who expressed her intention of adhering to

[1] L'Estoile.

them to the letter. The King, eager to get the affair concluded, assented to her demands, and begged the Queen to do all in her power to hasten matters, so that the marriage might be celebrated so soon as the Cardinal de Lorraine, who had been despatched to Rome, had succeeded in overcoming the scruples of the Vatican. This Jeanne promised to do and, a day or two later, took leave of their Majesties and set out for Paris.

CHAPTER VI

Jeanne d'Albret arrives in Paris—Her illness and death—Suspicions of poisoning—Result of the autopsy—An "amusing incident"—Grief of Henri of Navarre on learning of his mother's death—His entry into Paris—Imprudent conduct of the Huguenots who accompany the King of Navarre exasperates the Parisians—Growing influence of Coligny with Charles IX. —He urges the King to assist the revolted Netherlands against Spain—Jealousy and alarm of Catherine de' Medici—Marriage of the Prince de Condé and Henriette de Clèves—Marriage of Henri of Navarre and Marguerite de Valois—Festivities at the Louvre—Allegorical entertainment at the Hôtel du Petit-Bourbon.

At the beginning of the last week in May, Jeanne d'Albret arrived in Paris and took up her quarters at the Hôtel de Condé, Rue de Grenelle-Saint-Honoré.[1] Her ostensible reason in preceding the Court to the capital, was to make extensive purchases in view of the approaching marriage; jewels and other costly gifts for her future daughter-in-law, suitable equipment for herself and her suite, and so forth; but, in reality, to ascertain the temper of the citizens towards the House of Bourbon, ere trusting her beloved son to their hospitality; for, as we have mentioned, she entertained the most profound dislike and distrust of the Parisians. On the evening of June 4, on her return from a shopping exhibition, the

[1] Several historians state that the Queen went to reside at the hotel of Jean Guillart, the excommunicated Bishop of Chartres, but this is incorrect.

Queen complained of feeling unwell; during the night she became much worse, and, on June 9, in spite of all the efforts of her physicians, she died at the age of forty-four.

Sinister rumours circulated among the little group of Huguenots around the death-bed and quickly spread through the city. A visit which the Queen had paid, on the day of her sudden seizure, to the shop of Catherine de' Medici's Florentine perfumer René ("a man," says L'Estoile, "impregnated with all kinds of wickedness, who lived on murders, thefts and poisonings") was considered a most suspicious circumstance, and it was freely asserted that she had been poisoned. "It was suspected," says La Planche, "that the Queen-Mother had had recourse to Maitre René, her reputed poisoner, who, in selling his perfumes and scented ruffs to the Queen, contrived to administer poison to her, from the effects of which she died shortly afterwards." Such writers as L'Estoile, Othagaray, de Thou, and Mézeray have not feared to add their testimony to the common prejudice; but there can be no question that Jeanne's health had been gradually failing for some time past, and the most trustworthy evidence, such as that of Palma Cayet, Henry IV.'s tutor, Favyn, the historian of Navarre, and the surgeons, Caillard and Desnœuds, who assisted the Queen in her last moments, all goes to indicate that she died a natural death.

At the autopsy, held by order of Charles IX., by his first surgeon and Jeanne's medical attendants, in the presence of certain officers of the deceased Queen's household, all the organs were found to be healthy and free from disease, with the exception of the lungs. "A large abscess was there discovered, which had broken, the

secretion being partially absorbed by the lungs, which were besides very extensively diseased."

Several Protestant writers have declared that the autopsy was valueless, "since the brain was not examined"; but this is quite untrue. It appears that, some time previously, Caillard had received special instructions from the Queen that after her death an examination was to be made of her brain, "in order to discover from what cause proceeded the itching sensation which she so often experienced on the crown of her head, so that if the prince her son or the princess her daughter were afflicted by the same, they might know what remedy to apply." These instructions were duly carried out by Desnœuds, under Caillard's directions; and it was found that the irritation proceeded "from certain vesicles full of water lying between the brain and the membrane investing it." Caillard distinctly stated that the Queen died from the bursting of an abscess on the lungs, and Desnœuds was of the same opinion. "Messieurs," said the latter, addressing his colleagues, "if her Majesty had died, as has been wrongly asserted, from having smelt some poisonous object, the marks would be perceptible on the coating of the brain; but, on the contrary, the brain is healthful and as free from disease as possible. If her Majesty had died from swallowing poison, traces of such would have been visible in the stomach, where we can discover nothing of the kind. There is no other cause, therefore, for her Majesty's decease but rupture of an abscess on the lungs." [1]

"It may also be observed," remarks the Queen's English biographer, Miss Freer, a writer by no means disposed to leniency where Catherine de' Medici is

[1] Palma Cayet, *Chronologie novennaire*.

concerned, "that the symptoms attending Jeanne's malady were not of a nature to be produced by poison; also, that the Queen herself, during an illness which lasted five days, suspected nothing of the kind, or she would have imparted her suspicions to Coligny, in the course of their frequent confidential interviews, that he might warn and protect her son against a similar fate. The Admiral, on the contrary, insisted on the expediency of Henri's journey to Paris to perform the contract negotiated for him by his lamented mother.[1]

The remains of Jeanne d'Albret lay in state for five days, during which the principal personages of the Court came to pay the deceased queen the formal visit which etiquette required. "On this occasion," writes Marguerite, "such an amusing incident took place that, although it is unworthy to be recorded in history, it may be privately mentioned between you and me. Madame de Nevers,[2] whose disposition you know, went, with the Cardinal de Bourbon, Madame de Guise, the Princess de Condé, her sisters and myself, to the lodgings of the late Queen of Navarre, in order to acquit ourselves of the last tribute of respect due to her rank and to the relationship we bore her; not, however, with the pomps and ceremonies which our religion sanctions, but with the mean ceremonial permitted by Huguenoterie; that is to say, she was lying in her ordinary bed, the curtains of which were drawn back, without tapers, priests, cross, or holy water. Madame de Nevers, whom the Queen, in her lifetime, had detested above every other person in the world, and who paid her back by word and deed in the

[1] Jeanne d'Albret.

[2] Henriette de Clèves, wife of Ludovic de Gonzague, Duc de Nevers.

same coin—for, as you are aware, she knew how to spite those whom she hated—stepped from among us and, with sundry fine, humble, and low curtseys, approached the bed and, taking the Queen's hand in her own, kissed it; then, with another profound reverence, full of respect, returned to our side; we, who knew of their hatred, appreciating all this."

The deceased Queen had left instructions for her interment in the sepulchre of her family, in the cathedral of Lescar, near Pau; but her wishes were disregarded and, by the orders of Charles IX., her remains were conveyed to Vendôme and deposited near those of her husband, Antoine de Bourbon.

Henri of Navarre, who had quitted Béarn on his way to Paris, in the early days of June, had arrived at Chaunay, in Poitou, when the news of his mother's death reached him. Already in somewhat indifferent health, the blow, which was totally unexpected, completely prostrated him and brought on a violent attack of fever, so that Jeanne had already been laid to rest when he arrived at Vendôme. Here he remained for several days, and appears to have had some thought of demanding that the marriage should be indefinitely postponed and returning to Béarn, but Coligny, who fondly imagined that the match was to be the dawn of a new era, wrote letter after letter to induce him to continue his journey, and eventually he yielded to the Admiral's representations, and, on July 20, made his solemn entry into Paris, accompanied by his cousin, the Prince de Condé, and eight hundred Huguenot gentlemen, all wearing long mourning mantles of black cloth.

In the Faubourg Saint-Antoine the young King was

received by the Ducs d'Anjou and d'Alençon, the Cardinal de Bourbon, the Ducs de Guise and Montpensier, the Maréchaux de Montmorency, de Cossé, d'Amville, and Tavannes, and about four hundred gentlemen of the Court. The usual compliments having been exchanged—hollow enough in most instances, we fear—the two parties joined forces and proceeded to the Louvre, through streets densely thronged with people, who applauded the Duc de Guise and the other Catholic leaders, and respectfully saluted the King of Navarre, but cast angry and threatening glances at the formidable body of Huguenot nobles and gentlemen who brought up the rear of the procession. For all that was bravest and most distinguished in Protestant France rode there: The gallant La Rochefoucauld, the grave and chivalrous Téligny, husband of the Admiral's daughter Louise; Montgommery, the involuntary slayer of Henri II.; the Vidame de Chartres, negotiator of the Treaty of Hampton Court; Piles, the heroic defender of Saint-Jean-d'Angely; Montclar, Soubise, Renel, Duras, Grammont, the two Pardaillans, Caumont, Guerchy, and many others, few of whom were fated ever to see their homes again.

While the preparations for the marriage were being made with all that elegance and luxury with which the Valois knew so well how to invest their festivities, and the young King of Navarre was engaged in paying his addresses to the reluctant princess destined to become his wife, the Court was a hot-bed of intrigue, and the city seething with suppressed excitement. It is unfortunately seldom the practice of minorities which, after prolonged and painful struggles, find power at length in their grasp, to conduct themselves with tact and moderation, and of

this rule the behaviour of the Huguenots affords a striking illustration. Ignoring the fact that they were indebted to the favourable position they now occupied, far less to their own courage and devotion—though, indeed, they had been courageous and devoted enough—than to the exigencies of the Queen-Mother's tortuous policy, they were at no pains to avoid shocking the susceptibilities of the Parisians. Their truculent attitude as they passed fully armed through the streets, the boastful tone of their conversation, and still more their ostentatious disregard of Catholic observances, combined to render them intensely obnoxious to the citizens, taught to regard these "half-foreigners" of the South with horror and loathing, as despoilers of churches, contemners of the Mass, and slayers of priests. Moreover, their numbers roused the greatest apprehension among the more timorous, who asked themselves, and with some apparent reason, why, on the occasion of an event which was supposed to be the pledge and proof of peace and amity between the rival religions, the King of Navarre should have chosen to enter Paris at the head of this formidable array, and feared lest they should be "robbed and despoiled in their houses."

And just as the conduct of the rank and file of the Huguenots exasperated the populace of Paris, so did the pretensions of Coligny cause alarm and resentment at the Court.

We have said that the Admiral had, from the time of his visit to the King at Blois, in the previous September, acquired a great influence over Charles IX., and this influence had steadily increased until it threatened to completely eclipse that of the Queen-Mother. The King was so entirely dominated by the Huguenot leader

that he devoted to him entire days ; in his cabinet, at the Louvre, the Admiral remained with him until a late hour at night ; and, in his Majesty's absence, he presided at the Council ; at his request, the Croix de Gastines, at Paris, which was specially offensive to Huguenot sentiment, as commemorating the destruction of a house and the execution of two of their number, was removed ; many of the Huguenot grievances were listened to and satisfaction promised ; for the moment, he seemed master of the situation.

It was the one healthy influence that had come into Charles's life ; the Admiral bade him remember that he was King of France and encouraged in him the desire to be a great king—a warrior like Charles VIII., like Louis XII., like François I., his grandfather. And ever, in season and out of season, he urged him to take part openly in the struggle of the revolted Netherlands against Spain. His object was a threefold one. In the first place, he knew that, sooner or later, a conflict with Spain was inevitable, unless France were prepared to sink into a subordinate position in Western Europe. It were surely better that that conflict should come while Philip had his hands full than at the time of Spain's own choosing. In the second, he naturally desired to assist his co-religionists in the Low Countries to shake off the intolerable yoke under which they had so long groaned. But, most of all, he desired war, because he perceived that a foreign war, which would unite all parties in one common cause, was the surest, nay, the only guarantee of internal peace.

Catherine's position was indeed an embarrassing one. Distrusted by the extreme Catholics for her concessions to the Huguenots, denounced as a second Jezebel by the

bigoted Calvinists, and intensely unpopular with the people, as a foreigner and for favouring the Italian adventurers who infested the court, she now found herself threatened with the loss of her son's confidence and of that power which was the great object of her life. "The Admiral was taking away from her her little one, whom she had so well accustomed to obey her and to do nothing save according to her will. A declaration of war was to be risked without her sanction or approval."[1] She, who, by so many sacrifices, so many labours, such sagacity and penetration, had monopolised the power and guided the realm for nearly eleven years! A war by Coligny's orders, a war against Spain, the King at the head of the troops, with the flower of France around him, and the Admiral, instigator of everything, active and ubiquitous! What would she be then? A woman in the State, but no longer the Regent, no longer that great Queen-Mother, so much dreaded and obeyed! She saw the danger; and the Louvre saw it soon. We are on the eve of her sanguinary work.[2]

The marriage of the Prince de Condé with Marie de Clèves preceded by some days that of his cousin. It took place, with great rejoicings, on August 10, at the Château of Blandy, near Melun, in the presence of Charles IX., the King of Navarre, his fiancée, the two queens, and a large number of noblemen of both religions; and was celebrated *tout-à-fait à la Huguenote*, a fact

[1] The Spanish Ambassador relates that when the King proposed to consult with Catherine on questions connected with the proposed war, "the Admiral told him very courteously that they were not questions to be discussed with women and clerks."

[2] Armand Baschet, *Diplomatie vénitienne*.

which still further exasperated the fanatical Catholics of Paris. The royal wedding had been fixed for Monday, August 18; but on the Saturday the Papal dispensation, to obtain which de Marle, the French Ambassador at Rome, aided by the Cardinal de Lorraine, had been using every possible means of persuasion for weeks past, had not arrived. Charles IX. was beside himself with anxiety and vexation. To postpone the marriage was impossible without great inconvenience; while to celebrate it without the sanction of the Holy See would be to scandalize the ultra-Catholic party, already sufficiently hostile to the match, and to cause them to regard it as illegal. Moreover, the Cardinal de Bourbon would almost certainly refuse to perform it. In their perplexity, the King and the Queen-Mother resolved to have recourse to fraud, in order to deceive the public and the cardinal. They pretended to have received intelligence from Rome that the dispensation had been duly granted and was on its way to Paris. This assurance satisfied the scruples of the cardinal, an easy-going and unsuspicious prelate, and, much to the relief of his Majesty, he raised no objection to performing the ceremony.[1]

On Sunday, August 17, the marriage-contract was signed at the Louvre, and Henri and Marguerite formally betrothed by the Cardinal de Bourbon. After a magnificent supper, followed by a ball, the princess was conducted, in great pomp, by the whole of the Royal Family to the palace of the Archbishop of Paris, where she passed the

[1] On the morrow of the marriage, Catherine de' Medici wrote to Rome to excuse their action, representing that it would have been impossible to defer the union longer "without danger of several inconveniences"; and at the end of October, Henri of Navarre, having in the meanwhile become a Catholic, the dispensation was granted.

night; such being the traditional custom on the occasion of the marriage of a daughter of France.[1]

The following day, at three o'clock in the afternoon, a brilliant cortège quitted the Louvre. The procession was headed by a hundred gentlemen of the King's Household, bearing halberds, the heralds-at-arms with their tabards, emblazoned with the Arms of France, and the Guards with their clarions, trumpets and cymbals. Then came the King of Navarre, accompanied by the Ducs d'Anjou and d'Alençon, the Prince de Condé and his younger brother, the Marquis de Conti, the Duc de Montpensier and his son, the Dauphin of Auvergne, of whom the four last-named belonged to the House of Bourbon, and followed by Coligny, Guise, the *Maréchaux de France* and a distinguished body of nobles of the two religions, of which this marriage was to seal the reconciliation. Henri of Navarre had assumed the crown which the recent death of his mother had placed upon his head, and had discarded his mourning for "a costume of pale yellow satin, covered with raised embroideries, enriched with pearls and precious stones." Similar coats were worn by the Ducs d'Anjou and d'Alençon. "M. d'Anjou, amongst other jewels in his cap, had thirty-two pearls of twelve carats, famous pearls bought for the occasion at

[1] The marriage-contract was substantially the same as the treaty, signed on the previous April 11, save that Henri, who now took the titles of "King of Navarre, by the Grace of God, sovereign lord of Béarn, *pair de France*, Duc de Vendôme, d'Albret, de Beaumont, de Gaudie, de Montblanc, et de Pegnafiel, Comte de Foix, d'Armagnac, de Marle, Bigorre, et Rodez, Vicomte de Limoges, Marsan, et Lautrec; governor for the King of France and his lieutenant-general and admiral in Vienne," relinquished to his bride the revenues of the counties of Marle, Chatellenies, de la Fère, Ham, Bohain and Beauvoir, with the right to dispose of their offices and benefices.

HENRI IV., KING OF FRANCE AND NAVARRE

From an Engraving after a Drawing attributed to PIERRE DU MONSTIER, *in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris*

HENRI IV
ROI DE FRANCE

Gonella, at a cost of 23,000 golden écus." [1] It was remarked that, with the exception of the bridegroom, all the Protestant nobles affected a Puritan simplicity of attire, while the Catholics displayed the greatest ostentation.

The cavalcade proceeded to the archbishop's palace, from which presently emerged the bride, conducted by the King, "whose cap, poniard, and raiment," says the Venetian Ambassador, "represented from five to six hundred thousand êcus, and followed by the Queen, the Queen-Mother, the Duchess of Lorraine, and more than one hundred and twenty ladies of the Court, "brilliant in the most splendid stuffs, such as brocade, cloth-of-gold, and velvet brocaded in gold and laced with silver," and covered with diamonds, rubies and other precious stones. Marguerite was attired in a robe of violet spangled with *fleurs-de-lys*, "with the crown, and the *couët* of speckled ermine, which was worn on the front of the body, all glittering with the Crown jewels and the large blue mantle, with a train four ells long, which was borne by three princesses." [2] Thus dressed *à la royale*, according to her own expression, "flashing with diamonds and jewels, but more seducing still by the power of her own charms, she advanced adorned for the sacrifice."

A magnificent amphitheatre, covered with cloth-of-gold, with side-galleries, one of which, passing through the nave, led to the choir, and the other to the episcopal palace, had been erected before the porch of Notre-Dame. Along the latter, the Court made its way, while an enormous concourse of people thronged the windows and

[1] Giovanni Michieli, *Relazione della corte di Francia*, cited by Armand Baschet, *la Diplomatie vénitienne.*

[2] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

roofs of the adjoining houses, and surged and jostled one another below the platform, in order to catch a glimpse of the procession. That the marriage was intensely unpopular among the Parisians was evident from the behaviour of the spectators. There was an almost complete absence of the enthusiasm usually manifested on such occasions; curiosity alone seemed to have brought them together, and the King and the other members of the Royal Family were suffered to pass by with hardly an acclamation. At the far end of the amphitheatre, by the door of the cathedral, the Cardinal de Bourbon was awaiting the youthful pair, and the marriage was performed according to the formula previously agreed upon by the two parties. Davila relates that when the cardinal asked Marguerite, whose deathly pallor and dejected air appeared to many to augur but ill for the happiness of the marriage, whether she accepted the King of Navarre for her husband, she refused to reply, whereupon Charles IX. gave her a little push at the back of her head "to make her give that sign of consent, in lieu of speech."[1]

After the marriage was concluded, the bridal pair, with their suites, proceeded along a platform into the cathedral, as far as the tribune separating the nave from the choir. Here they found two flights of steps, one of which led down to the choir, the other through the nave out of the church. Marguerite and the Catholics

[1] According to Mézeray, it was the Cardinal de Bourbon who made the princess bow her head. "It was at this moment," adds Mongez, "that the Duke de Guise, who had raised himself above the other nobles to watch the face and eyes of Marguerite, received such a threatening glance from Charles IX. that he well-nigh lost consciousness."

descended the former to hear the Mass; while the King of Navarre and the Huguenot nobles quitted the church and made their way into the cloisters to wait until the conclusion of the service.

Mass ended, Maréchal d'Amville came to conduct the King of Navarre back to his wife, whom he embraced in the presence of her family.[1] The bridal cortège then returned to the archbishop's palace, where a superb banquet had been prepared, during which heralds-at-arms flung gold medals among the crowd, some of which were engraven with the initials of the bride and bridegroom, interlaced and encircled by the motto: "*Constricta hoc discordia vinclo*"; while others bore a lamb and a cross, with the device: "*Vobis annuntio pacem.*"

When the Court returned to the Louvre, the people were more demonstrative than they had been earlier in the day. But the applause was not for the bridal pair, nor for the King of France; it was for the idol of the Parisian populace, the Duc de Guise, who bowed and smiled repeatedly in response to the acclamations of the mob.

On his arrival at the palace, the king held a Court and was extremely gracious to all who presented themselves, notably to the deputations from the Parlement and public bodies of the city, who came to offer him their felicitations on his sister's marriage. In the evening, there was a grand ball, in the great hall of the Louvre,

[1] As they re-entered the church, d'Amville pointed out to Coligny the standards captured from the Protestants at Jarnac and Montcontour, which hung from the arches of the cathedral. "Those are mournful trophies," remarked the Admiral, with a smile; "but they will soon give place to others more agreeable to us;" the allusion being to those which he hoped to capture from the Spaniards, in Flanders.

which was attended by all the rank and beauty of France. The famous squadron of the Queen-Mother's maids-of-honour was in full force, and their combined charms quite overcame the Legate, who exclaimed to the King of Navarre : " *C'est bien le plus gracieux escadron du monde.*" " *Et le plus dangereux, Monseigneur,*" replied the Béarnais, laughing. The ball was succeeded by a ballet, a form of entertainment which in those days had all the charm of novelty. Three chariots, entered "in the shape of rocks of silver," full of musicians; on one was the celebrated singer Étienne Leroy, who delighted the company with his melodious voice. Other chariots contained niches "formed by four columns of silver and containing a divinity of the seas" ; while others again represented sea-lions, "the body ending in a fish's tail, which bore other divinities dressed in cloth-of-gold and seated on silver shells." Finally, appeared a gilded hippopotamus, on the tail of which sat the King himself, attired as Neptune with his trident in his hand ; while the King of Navarre and the Princes of the Blood were distributed among the other chariots. All these chariots traversed the great hall of the Louvre, and when they stopped, musicians sang verses composed by the best poets in the service of the court. [1]

On the morrow, August 19, the Court proceeded to the Hôtel d'Anjou, where the King of Navarre had caused a magnificent banquet to be prepared, at the conclusion of which it returned to the Louvre, for a second ball, which lasted until a late hour. On the Wednesday, there was an allegorical entertainment, devised by the Duke d'Anjou at the Hôtel du Petit

[1] Mongez, *Histoire de Marguerite de Valois.*

Bourbon,[1] which aroused a good deal of comment. "In the hall of the palace, a paradise or heaven had been constructed, the entrance to which was defended by the King and his two brothers, fully armed. On the other side was hell, in which there were many devils and little imps making a racket and playing monkey-tricks, and a great wheel, entirely surrounded by little wheels, revolving in the said hell. A river, traversed by Charon's bark, separated hell from paradise. Beyond the latter were the Elysian Fields, represented by a garden adorned by foliage and all kinds of flowers, surmounted by the empyrean heaven, that is to say a wheel bearing the twelve signs of the Zodiac, the seven planets, and an infinitude of little crystal stars. The wheel was in continual motion and caused also the revolution of the paradise, in which there were twelve nymphs simply attired. Several knight-errants, led by the King of Navarre, presented themselves and endeavoured to fight their way into paradise and carry off the nymphs. But the three knights who guarded its entrance repulsed them. The latter, having broken their lances and fought for some time with their swords, precipitated them into Tartarus, where they were dragged away by the devils and furies. The combat lasted until the attacking knights had been led away and imprisoned in hell. Then Mercury and Cupid descended from heaven, and made the air resound with their songs. Mercury was represented by Étienne Leroy, the celebrated singer. Having reached

[1] The Hôtel, or Palais, du Petit-Bourbon, which had been built by Charles V., was situated between the Louvre and the Church of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois. It was partially demolished in 1653, though the last buildings, which were used by the Garde-Meuble, remained standing for nearly a century longer.

the earth, they approached the guardians of paradise, felicitated them on their victory, and ascended once more to heaven. The knights went to seek the nymphs and performed with them, around a fountain which occupied the middle of the hall, a variety of dances, which lasted more than an hour. After this, they yielded to the prayers of the assembly and delivered the imprisoned knights, fought pell-mell with them, and broke their lances. The whole hall was filled with the sparks and flames which spurted forth from the shock of their weapons. But soon a great explosion was heard, accompanied by a whirlwind of flame, which, in a short while, consumed all the scenery and brought this Gothic spectacle to a close." [1]

The festivities terminated on Thursday, August 21, by a grand tournament in front of the Louvre. On one side appeared Charles IX. and his two brothers, and the Ducs de Guise and d'Aumale, disguised as Amazons; on the other, the King of Navarre and several nobles of his suite, dressed in Turkish costume, in robes of rich brocade, with turbans on their heads. The three queens and the Court watched the combat from balconies erected on either side of the lists.

[1] Mongez, *Histoire de Marguerite de Valois.*

CHAPTER VII

Suspicions and uneasiness of the Huguenots—Coligny is strongly urged to leave Paris, but is deaf to all appeals—Catherine determines to remove the Admiral from her path—Her coadjutors—Her object—Attempted assassination of Coligny—Indignation of Charles IX.—The Huguenots, exasperated, indulge in rash and threatening demonstrations—Catherine, fearful of her guilt being brought home to her, determines on a massacre of the Protestant chiefs—Arguments by which she succeeds in obtaining the consent of the King, which is given "on condition that not one Huguenot should be left alive to reproach him"—Preparations for the massacre—Marguerite de Valois's account of the night of August 23–24, 1572—The lives of Henri of Navarre and the Prince de Condé are spared, on condition of their renouncing their faith—Magnanimous conduct of Marguerite in refusing the Queen-Mother's offer to procure the annulment of her marriage.

THE part allotted to the King of Navarre and his friends in the mythological allegory at the Hotel du Petit-Bourbon had caused much unfavourable comment among the Huguenots; some regarded it as an insult; others—it was a superstitious age—as an evil omen. The Calvinists, moreover, felt ill at ease in the midst of a city so fiercely hostile to them, and which, even on the occasion of the recent marriage, had scarcely troubled to disguise its animosity; while the more clear-sighted of them feared the resentment of Catherine, who had the mortification of seeing her once undisputed influence over her feeble son

altogether overshadowed by that of Coligny, becoming each day more firmly established in the King's favour and more completely master of his mind. Suspicion and distrust were everywhere. Maréchal de Montmorency, who, though a Catholic, was so closely in sympathy with his kinsman Coligny as to be generally regarded as his ally, pleaded illness and retired to Chantilly. Not a few of the more prudent Huguenots followed his example. One of these, Montferrand by name, who was commonly accounted half-witted, took leave of the Admiral with the following words: "I am going, because of the good cheer they are giving you. I prefer to be classed with madmen than with fools; you can cure the one, but not the other." [1]

Coligny, indeed, received repeated warnings and was strongly urged to leave Paris; but, though he could hardly fail to be aware of the danger of his position, he was deaf to all appeals. To quit the field at such a moment was to lose it, and he had far too much at stake. Although, on August 9, the Council had pronounced uncompromisingly against a breach with Spain, and the King had sided with it, the Admiral had not ceased his preparations for assisting the revolted Netherlands. Three thousand Huguenots were already on the frontier; twelve thousand foot and three thousand horse were being raised. Should this formidable army once enter Spanish territory, it would be hard indeed for Charles to disavow the action of his subjects, and a declaration of war on the part of Spain would almost certainly follow.

And Catherine knew this—knew, too, that war would render Coligny indispensable, both as statesman and

[1] D'Aubigné, *Histoire universelle*, iii. 303.

soldier, and reduce her own waning influence to vanishing point. Tortured by jealousy and hatred of this redoubtable rival, with whom she was determined never to share the government, she decided to take the only sure means of removing him from her path. And that means was assassination; a practice which had become terribly rife since the beginning of the civil wars and the spread of Italian manners, and no longer excited the reprobation it had evoked in less troublous times. "People kept assassins in their pay as they kept servants: the Guises had them, the Châtillons had them, the kings had them; all those who could afford the expense had them, and these assassins were seldom or ever punished." [1]

Who her coadjutors were is somewhat doubtful; while the identity of the person chosen for the dastardly deed is also a matter for dispute. The Venetian Ambassador, Michieli, declares that the affair was concerted by the Queen-Mother and Anjou alone; but almost all other writers, both contemporary and modern, are convinced that the Guises were parties to the crime, though there is some difference of opinion as to whether the Duchesse de Nemours, the widow of François de Lorraine, was implicated. It is also probable that Catherine's confidants, Retz, Nevers, Birague, and Tavannes, were in the secret as well. As for the assassin, his name is variously given as Bême, a Bohemian in the service of the Guises; Maurevert, or Maurevel, a gentleman of experience in this *métier*, a dependent of the same family, and Tosinghi, a Florentine soldier of fortune, a creature of Catherine and Anjou. Bême is indicated by the Florentine Ambas-

[1] The foreign Ambassadors kept them, also, for the purpose of making away with political refugees from their own countries who had taken refuge in France.

sador, Petrucci, and Tosinghi by Michieli, but the weight of evidence seems to point to Maurevert.

What did Catherine hope would be the immediate result of the Admiral's death, besides the removal of a rival influence to her own? Undoubtedly, she anticipated a rising of all the Huguenots then in Paris and a sanguinary fracas between them and the Guise faction; for Guise, whose undying hatred of Coligny was common knowledge, notwithstanding their formal reconciliation, would certainly be suspected of the crime. Whatever the outcome of such an encounter might be, it could not fail to materially strengthen the hands of her own party; for both factions would emerge from it with severe losses. If, at one and the same time, she could rid herself of both Coligny and Guise, to say nothing of a few of the lesser lights of either party, the step she contemplated would, indeed, be a master-stroke of diplomacy! In any case, Catherine's attempt upon the Admiral's life proves conclusively, in the opinion of all impartial historians, that the terrible tragedy of St. Bartholomew's Day was in no sense premeditated, but was the result of a sudden resolution, forced upon her, as we shall show, by the failure of the lesser crime. "Why kill the chief before the general massacre?" asks Mérimée, very pertinently. "Would not such a step be calculated to alarm the Huguenots and put them on their guard?"

On Friday, August 22, between ten and eleven in the morning, Coligny, after attending the Council, was passing, on foot, through the Rue des Poulies, on his way to his lodging,[1] accompanied by about a dozen Huguenot

[1] It still appears to be the belief of most writers that the house occupied by Coligny was in the Rue de Béthisy, next the corner formed by that street and the Rue de l'Arbre Sec. But M. Fournier, in his *Paris*

gentlemen, when an arquebus was fired from the window of a house in the cloisters of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois.[1] One ball broke the forefinger of his right hand, while the same missile or another entered at the wrist of his left arm and passed out at the elbow. The assassin, who, following the example of Hamilton of Bothwellhaugh, the murderer of the Regent Murray, had taken the precaution to have a fleet horse in readiness at the back of the house, immediately took to flight and galloped off through the Porte Saint-Antoine into the open country; the fact that none of the Admiral's following were mounted, rendering pursuit hopeless; while Coligny was assisted to his lodging, and the famous surgeon Ambroise Paré summoned.

Charles X. was playing tennis at the Louvre with the Duc de Guise and Téligny, the Admiral's son-in-law, when news of the attempted assassination was brought him. In a transport of fury, he dashed his racket to the ground, exclaiming: "*Mort de Dieu!* when shall I have a moment's peace?" and went to his room "with sad and downcast countenance;" upon which Guise, well knowing that suspicion would point to him as the author of the crime, promptly disappeared, and remained in concealment for the rest of the day.

After dinner, Charles, accompanied by the Queen-Mother and her allies, Retz, Nevers, Birague, and Tavannes, went to visit the Admiral. "*Mon père*," said the King, "the pain is yours, but the despite is mine;"

démoli, maintains that it was in the Rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, of which the Rue de Béthisy was a continuation, at the Hôtel de Ponthieu.

[1] The house was tenanted by Piles de Villemar, a canon of Notre-Dame, and formerly tutor to the Duc de Guise.

and he vowed to leave no stone unturned to discover the authors of the outrage and mete out to them the most exemplary punishment. He nominated a commission of inquiry, begged the Admiral to remove to the Louvre, where the apartments of the Duchess of Lorraine should be placed at his disposal, and when the surgeons forbade this, sent a detachment of guards to protect him, and subsequently fifty arquebusiers, under Cosseins, who, two days later, took a prominent part in the murder of Coligny. Finally, he assigned quarters to a number of the Protestant nobles in the Rue de Béthisy, where the Catholics were ordered to surrender their houses to them; invited the King of Navarre and Condé to summon their intimate friends to the Louvre, and requested the former to send some of his Swiss guards to Coligny's house.

But all this did not allay the anger and excitement of the Huguenots. The dastardly attempt upon their leader's life had roused them to the last pitch of exasperation. They openly accused the Guises of the crime, paraded in crowds before the Hôtel de Guise, brandishing their swords and shouting anathemas, and insulted and beat any of the duke's people whom they found in the streets. Armand de Piles entered the Louvre, at the head of four hundred gentlemen, demanding instant vengeance on the assassin. The King of Navarre and Condé supported his demand and announced their intention of quitting Paris, if it were not complied with. Soon it began to be whispered that Catherine and Anjou had been parties to the outrage.[1] A body of Huguenots presented themselves before the King and Queen-Mother while at supper, and indulged in the most threatening

[1] The would-be assassin's arquebus, which he left behind him, was found to belong to one of Anjou's guards.

language. The elder Pardaillan,[1] addressing Catherine, declared that if justice were not done, the Calvinists would execute it themselves; while another of their leaders said to the King, alluding to the Admiral's wound, that it was an arm which would cost more than forty thousand arms.

That afternoon, and again early on the following morning, a meeting of the Huguenot chiefs was held at Coligny's house, in a room beneath that in which the Admiral was lying. The Vidame de Chartres and the minister Merlin urged that they should withdraw at once from Paris, taking their wounded leader with them.[2] But Téligny, acting no doubt on instructions from his father-in-law, strongly opposed such a step, declaring that he himself would answer for the good faith of the King, and eventually his counsels carried the day. It was, however, decided to go in a body to the Louvre on the Sunday morning, to formally accuse the Duc de Guise as the instigator of the crime, a resolution which came to the Queen-Mother's ears.

Catherine and Anjou were terrified. Their machinations had recoiled upon their own heads; Coligny would most certainly recover from his wound, and would become more powerful than ever; while their own complicity in the affair was within an ace of being discovered. If an inquiry were instituted, it was probable that Guise would not care to deny his complicity in an act which would greatly enhance his popularity among

[1] Hector Pardaillan, Baron de Gondrin and de Montespan, from whom the Marquis de Montespan, the husband of Louis XIV.'s celebrated mistress, traced his descent. He was killed at the Louvre in the massacre of the following Sunday.

[2] Maréchal de Montmorency had written offering to come himself, with five hundred horse, to escort Coligny to La Rochelle.

the mob, but would seek to shelter himself, by pleading the orders of Anjou, Lieutenant-General of the realm, and their guilt once publicly brought home to them, nothing could save them from disgrace and exile, if not from a worse fate.

It was necessary to act and to act at once. Without a moment's delay, Catherine called her advisers together —her three Italian favourites, Retz, Nevers, and Birague, the unworthy successor of l'Hôpital in the office of Chancellor, and Tavannes—in the garden of the Tuileries, then outside the city walls; and there she and Anjou concerted with them the plan of a massacre of the Huguenot chiefs, beginning with Coligny, in which affair Guise should again be made to figure as the principal agent.

But to plot and plan were useless, unless they could obtain the consent of the King—that feeble, neurotic, passionate, though well-meaning creature, "half beast and wholly a child," who was seldom for two days together of the same mind. Great as was still Catherine's influence over her son, she was very doubtful whether it would be sufficient to induce him to execute so complete a *volte-face*, since it appears to have been late in the afternoon ere she ventured to approach him. Even then, if we are to believe Marguerite, who, however, knew nothing of the plot, and is only repeating what she was subsequently told, the Queen-Mother did not herself broach the matter to the King, but sent Retz, "from whom she knew he would take it better than any one else," to pave the way. Retz proceeded to explain that the King was in error in supposing that the attempt against the Admiral had been instigated by the Duc de Guise alone, since the Queen-Mother and his brother Anjou had been

GASPARD DE COLIGNY, ADMIRAL OF FRANCE

From an Engraving after a Drawing attributed to FRANÇOIS CLOUET,
in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

L'Amiral de Coligny

partners in the affair; that their complicity was already suspected, while his Majesty himself was believed to have been a consenting party to the deed, and that the Huguenots, beside themselves with fury, intended to have resort to arms that very night. Marguerite's account lacks confirmation—the most dependable witnesses, such as Anjou and the Venetian Ambassadors, Michieli and Cavalli, make no mention of this interview; but there can be no question that when Catherine did approach her son, she admitted the part which she and Anjou had taken in the attempted assassination of Coligny, and pointed out the danger which threatened, not only his mother and brother, but himself, from the exasperation of the Admiral's followers, to which their rash and warlike demonstration on the previous day, their menaces, and their numbers gave only too much colour. Then, with diabolical ingenuity, she proceeded to recall to Charles's mind all the insults and injuries, real and imaginary, he had suffered at the hands of the Huguenots in general and Coligny in particular; of their attempt to seize his person at Monceaux, and his humiliating flight to Paris before Coligny's cavalry; of the weeks during which he had vainly besieged his own town of Saint-Jean-d'Angely; of the slaying of his faithful servant Charry, by Coligny's friends upon the Pont Saint-Michel, nine years before, and of the horrible atrocities committed on his defenceless subjects by the German mercenaries whom the Huguenots had called to their aid. She declared it to be the belief of all Catholic France that he had allowed his royal authority to be usurped by the Admiral, and taunted him with being but a mere tool in the hands of an arrogant and ambitious heretic, who carried his insolence so far as to threaten the King with a renewal of the

civil war, if he declined, at his bidding, to break with Spain.[1]

She insisted, and she called others to prove, that the Huguenots were already plotting; that Coligny had sent to Germany to raise 10,000 of the dreaded Reiters, and to the Protestant Cantons of Switzerland for a levy of 10,000 pike-men; that some of the Huguenot leaders had left Paris to raise the kingdom, and that the time and place of their assembling had already been decided; that the Catholic leaders, exasperated in their turn, and despairing of any resolute action on the part of the King, had met and resolved to form an offensive and defensive league, and to appoint a captain-general, a course which would, in all likelihood, eventually end in his Majesty's deposition in favour of the Duc de Guise. Finally, she showed that out of the peril which menaced them there was but one way of escape: to strike first and anticipate the designs of the Huguenots, by putting Coligny and the other leaders to death—there is no evidence that Catherine, at first, intended anything like a general massacre[2]—now that he had them in his grip, "gathered

[1] When, on August 9, the Council, largely through the influence of Catherine, had decided against war, Coligny, turning to the Queen-Mother, exclaimed: "Madame, the King refuses to enter on one war; God grant that another may not befall him, from which perhaps he will not have it in his power to withdraw!" The Admiral's enemies were not slow to interpret these words as a threat of civil war; but, as Coligny's English biographer, Mr. A. W. Whitehead, points out, it was probably merely intended as a warning that William of Orange and his followers would be thrown back on France, and that it would need force to dislodge them.

[2] Anjou says that she declared that "it would be sufficient to kill the Admiral, chief and author of all the civil wars, and that the Catholics, satisfied and contented wish the sacrifice of *two or three men*, would remain in their obedience."

together and shut up, as in a cage, within the walls of Paris."[1]

For over an hour Catherine reasoned and implored in vain. "The Queen my mother," writes Marguerite, "had never experienced so much difficulty as in persuading the King that this counsel had been given for the good of his realm, because of the friendship he bore M. l'Amiral, La Noue,[2] and Téligny." But the struggle was an unequal one. The unhappy King was completely unstrung by the events of the preceding day, exhausted from want of sleep, and in no condition to resist the importunities of the woman, obedience to whom was still with him almost second nature. Slowly but surely Catherine wore him down, and, on a sudden, honour, compassion, every consideration which might have helped to deter him were forgotten, and he was seized by an ungovernable frenzy. "We then perceived in him a strange mutation, a marvellous and astonishing metamorphosis. Rising and imposing silence upon us, he swore, by God's death, that, since we would have the Admiral killed, he gave his consent, on condition that every other Huguenot in France was put to death as well, so that not one should be left to reproach him, and he bade us hasten."[3]

The preparations for the sanguinary drama were soon made. Nothing, indeed, was more easy to concert, since

[1] Giovanni Michieli, *Relazione della Corte di Francia.*

[2] Marguerite forgets that La Noue was not in Paris at this time, but shut up with Louis of Nassau in Mons.

[3] *Discours du roy Henri III.* in the *Mémoires d'Etat de Villeroy.* By an inversion of the usual order of things, the authenticity of this evidence, which was first published in 1623, is disputed by several seventeenth- and eighteenth-century historians, Péréfixe, Mercier, Hénault, Millot, and Voltaire, but accepted by the majority of modern authorities on the period.

it coincided with the desires of the population of Paris, ready to rise spontaneously against the detested heretics. Marcel and Charron, the former and present Provost of the Merchants, were summoned to the Louvre, and asked how many men they could provide for the service of the king at a few hours notice. They answered, some twenty thousand. They were then informed, under a pledge of the strictest secrecy, that a Huguenot conspiracy had been discovered, and that, in order to frustrate it, they were to summon the city militia and every man whom they could raise to assemble at midnight before the Hôtel de Ville, where they would receive further instructions.[1] Every man was to wear a white linen sleeve on his left arm and a white cross on his hat, and a light was to be placed in each window. The gates were to be locked and guarded, the chain, which guarded the approach to the bridges raised, and all boats securely fastened to the banks, so that no one might cross the river. To Guise, assisted by d'Aumale and Henri d'Angoulême, was entrusted the supreme task of slaying the Admiral, which accomplished, the bell of the Palais de Justice was to give the signal for the general massacre to begin."[2]

[1] "These orders," writes Giovanni Michieli, "were executed with the greatest diligence and the utmost secrecy, to such a degree that every one was in ignorance as to what his neighbour was doing, and, since no one was able to ascertain for what purpose the orders had been issued, each was so much more attentive to what was about to happen."—*Relazione della Corte di Francia.*

[2] As a matter of fact, Catherine, fearing that at the last moment Charles might revoke the consent she had succeeded in wringing from him, gave orders, just before daybreak, for the bell of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois to sound the tocsin, instead of that of the Palais de Justice.

What followed has been told so often that it is needless to recapitulate it here, and we shall therefore confine ourselves to allowing Marguerite, "*le grand, le véritable historien de la Saint-Barthélemy*," to relate her own experience of that awful night:

"As for me, no one told me anything of all this. I saw that every one was in a state of excitement. The Huguenots regarded me with suspicion, because I was a Catholic, and the Catholics, because I had married the King of Navarre, who was Huguenot. So that no one said anything to me until the evening, when, being present at the *coucher* of the Queen my mother, seated on a chest by the side of my sister of Lorraine,[1] who, I saw, was very sad, the Queen my mother, while speaking to some one, perceived me and told me to go to bed. As I was making my curtsey, my sister takes me by the arm, and, bursting into tears, exclaims: '*Mon Dieu*, my sister, do not go!' which frightened me extremely. The Queen my mother perceived it, and calling my sister, scolded her soundly, and forbade her to tell me anything. My sister replied that it was unseemly to send me to be sacrificed like that, and that, without doubt, if they discovered anything, they would avenge themselves on me. The Queen my mother replied that, if it pleased God, I should suffer no harm; but that, however that might be, it was necessary for me to go, 'for fear, if I stayed, that they should suspect something' . . . I perceived that they were arguing, but could not understand what they said. She (the Queen-Mother) again commanded me angrily to go to bed. My sister, melting to tears, bade me good-night, without daring to say anything further; and I departed, all frightened and bewildered, without

[1] Claude de Valois, Duchess of Lorraine.

knowing what I had to fear. So soon as I reached my cabinet, I began to pray to God that it would please Him to take me under His protection and to defend me, without knowing from whom or what. Thereupon, the King, my husband, who had retired to rest, told me to go to bed. This I did, and found his bed surrounded by thirty or forty Huguenots. . . . All night long they did nothing but talk about the accident which had befallen the Admiral,[1] determining, so soon as it was light, to demand of the King that M. de Guise should be brought to justice, and that, if this were not granted them, to execute it themselves. As for me, I had always in mind my sister's tears and could not sleep, because of the fears with which she had inspired me, although I knew not of what. The night passed in this manner, without my closing an eye. At daybreak, the King my husband told me that he would go and play tennis, whilst waiting until King Charles should be awake, having resolved to demand justice of him at once. He quitted my chamber, and all his gentlemen with him. I, perceiving that it was daylight, supposed that the danger to which my sister had alluded must be past, and, being overcome with fatigue, told my nurse to fasten the door, in order that I might sleep in peace. An hour later, as I was fast asleep, comes a man, striking with hands and feet at the door, and shouting 'Navarre! Navarre!' My nurse, imagining that it was the King my husband, runs quickly to the door. It was M. de Léran,[2] who had a sword-cut

[1] It was no doubt a large four-poster bed, with thick curtains, which enabled the King to converse with his friends without disturbing her Majesty's privacy.

[2] Brantôme alludes to him as Lérac, while Mongez calls him Teyran. His real name was Gabriel de Levis, Vicomte de Léran, and he was one of the King of Navarre's equerries. Alexandre Dumas, in his

on the elbow and a halberd-wound in the arm, and was still pursued by four archers, who all entered the room at his heels. He, seeking to save himself, threw himself on my bed. I, feeling that these men had hold of me, flung myself on the *ruelle*, and he after me, still clasping me across the body. This man was a total stranger to me, and I did not know whether he came there to insult me or whether the archers were against him or against me. We were both of us screaming, and one was just as much alarmed as the other. At last, God willed that M. de Nançay,[1] Captain of the Guards, should come upon the scene, who, finding me in this plight, could not refrain from laughing, notwithstanding the compassion he felt for me. He severely reprimanded the archers for this indiscretion, ordered them out, and granted me the life of the poor man who was holding me, whom I caused to be put to bed and to have his wound dressed in my cabinet until such time as he was fully cured. Whilst I was changing my nightgown—for he had covered me all over with blood—M. de Nançay acquainted me with all that was happening, and assured me that the King my husband was in the King's chamber and had suffered no harm. Then, making me wrap myself in a bed-gown, he conducted me to the chamber of my sister, Madame de Lorraine, where I arrived more dead than alive. As we entered the ante-chamber, the doors of which were all open, a gentleman named Bourse was run through by a halberd within three paces of me, as he was flying

celebrated romance, *la Reine Margot*, makes La Môle, of whom we shall have something to say in the next chapter, the hero of this adventure.

[1] Gaspard de la Châtre, Seigneur de Nançay. He had been Captain of the Swiss Guards since 1568.

from the archers who pursued him. I fell to one side, well-nigh swooning, into M. de Nançay's arms, thinking that the thrust would have impaled us both. When I had somewhat recovered, I entered the little room in which my sister slept. Whilst I was there, M. de Miossans, first gentleman to the King my husband, and Armagnac, his first *valet-de-chambre*, came in quest of me, to implore me to save their lives. I went and threw myself on my knees before the King and the Queen my mother, to make intercession with them for their lives, which they at length accorded me." [1]

Brantôme assures that Henri of Navarre himself owed his life to Marguerite's intercession, but most historians are agreed that there never was any serious intention of putting either the young King or the Prince de Condé to death, an act which it would have been impossible to justify. On leaving his bedchamber, Henri and his gentleman had been promptly arrested and conducted to Charles IX.'s cabinet, where they found Condé, who had been apprehended at the same time. "Take that *canaille* away!" cried Charles; and the hapless followers of Navarre were led out and mercilessly butchered in the courtyard of the Louvre. Then the King, who was beside himself with passion, informed the princes that all that was being done was by his orders, that they had allowed themselves to be made the leaders of his enemies, and that lives were justly forfeited. As, however, they were his kinsmen and connections, he would pardon them, if they conformed to the religion of their ancestors, the only one he would henceforth tolerate in his realm. If not, they must prepare to share the fate of their friends. Condé courageously replied that he refused to believe the

[3] *Mémoires de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

King capable of violating his most sacred pledges, but that he was accountable for his religion to God alone and would remain faithful to it, even if it cost him his life. Navarre, of a more politic and wary disposition, and besides, somewhat indifferent on the subject of religion, assumed a more humble and conciliatory tone, begging the King not to compel him to outrage his conscience, and to consider that he was now not only his kinsman, but closely connected with him by marriage. Charles, after indulging in terrible threats against Condé, finally dismissed them, saying that he gave them three days for reflection, and directing that they should be strictly guarded.

However, Marguerite tells us that "those who had commenced these proceedings"—by which she means the Guises and their partisans, though, as we have seen, the responsibility really lay at Catherine's door—were indignant at the Princes of the Blood having been spared, and "recognising that, as the King of Navarre was my husband, no one would lift a hand against him, they set to work to persuade the Queen my mother that my marriage must be dissolved." Catherine, for the moment, at any rate, appears to have lent a favourable ear to this sinister suggestion, and a few days after the massacre, when her daughter presented herself at her *lever*, drew her aside and commanded her to tell her upon oath—it was a Saint's Day and the whole Royal Family were about to communicate—whether the marriage had been consummated, adding that, if it had not been, she saw a means of having it annulled. But Marguerite, although she had no love for her husband, was far too generous-hearted to deliver him into the hands of his enemies, and perceiving the snare, skilfully avoided it. "I begged her

to believe," she writes, "that I was not qualified to answer her question; but I said that, whichever way it was, as she had placed me in this position, I would rather abide in it—strongly suspecting that they only desired to separate me from my husband, in order to do him some evil turn."

CHAPTER VIII

Henri of Navarre and Condé renounce the Protestant faith—Gregory XIII. sends a Bull ratifying the marriage of Henri and Marguerite—Unenviable position of the King of Navarre—He finds in his wife a valuable ally—The Court of Charles IX.—Henri and Marguerite an ill-assorted pair—Reprehensible conduct of the King of Navarre—Marguerite's *liaison* with Le Môle—Outbreak of the fourth civil war—*Rapprochement* between the Huguenots and the "*Politiques*"—Discontent of Duc d'Alençon, who becomes the secret head of this confederacy—Edict of Boulogne ends the fourth civil war—Visit of the Polish envoys to Paris to offer the crown of Poland to Anjou—Departure of Anjou for Poland—His unsuccessful endeavour to become reconciled with Marguerite.

The conversion of the two princes greatly occupied the Court. Marguerite, a fervent Catholic, spared no effort to induce her husband to return to the fold of the Church, and found zealous auxiliaries in the Cardinal de Bourbon and the Jesuit Maldonato, Queen Elizabeth's confessor, who had been specially charged to instruct him. The astute Béarnais, who already seems to have had some presentiment of the great part he was one day to play, was not the man to sacrifice a glorious future to his attachment to the Reformed doctrines, and accordingly feigned to lend an attentive ear to the arguments of his teachers. Condé was the object of like solicitations, to which, however, he replied with anger and contempt. His obstinacy so enraged Charles IX., that one day, when

the prince had proved more than ordinarily contumacious, he called for a sword, vowing that he would proceed to Condé's apartments, with some of his guards, and slay him with his own hand. Probably, he only intended to intimidate him into submission ; but his queen, the gentle and pious Elizabeth, convinced that he was in earnest, threw herself at his feet, and besought him not to stain his hands with his kinsman's blood. His Majesty yielded to his consort's entreaties, and contented himself with summoning Condé, and, when he appeared, shouting in a voice of thunder : " Mass, death, or Bastille ! "

The prince haughtily refused the first proposition, but, shortly afterwards, he consented to abjure, and became, to all appearance, so fervent a Catholic that the courtiers laughingly declared that his devotion left him no time to observe the love-passages between his wife and the Duc d'Anjou. Henri of Navarre also abjured, and, on October 3, 1672, the two princes addressed to the Pope a very respectful letter, begging him to accept their submission and admit them into the fold. It was only then that Gregory XIII. consented to send a Bull ratifying the marriage of Marguerite and Henri. The canonical irregularities which vitiated it had up to that time rendered a dissolution easy, which proves once more that it depended entirely on Marguerite whether it should be pronounced.

Notwithstanding their abjuration, Henri and Condé were still regarded with suspicion, and remained in a sort of quasi-captivity. Their position, particularly that of the young King, was far from a pleasant one, and it must have needed all Henri's self-control to prevent himself from openly resenting the sneers and taunts which the Catholic nobles felt themselves safe in levelling

at "this little prisoner of a kinglet."[1] After a while, however, Charles IX., who had always entertained a strong liking for Henri, recognising in him qualities of head and heart in which his brothers were conspicuously lacking, began to treat him with kindness and even affection; while in his wife he found a valuable ally. Although, as we have said, Marguerite had no love for her husband, she naturally resented, as a slight to her own dignity, the want of consideration shown him by those who, under other circumstances, would have been forced to accord the prince the respect due to his rank, and held herself in duty bound to aid him by every means in her power. Thus, in grave crises, she invariably drew near him, and more than once her timely counsel extricated Henri from situations full of difficulty and danger.

It was a strange scene amidst which this youthful pair had commenced their wedded life. No more singular Court than that of the last years of Charles IX.—which Brantôme, in all good faith, describes as "a true paradise and school of all honesty and virtue, the ornament of France"—is known to history. At its head, the half-crazy King, with his tall stooping figure and beautiful furtive eyes; already marked for death; tortured by remorse; distrusting all around him, and none more than the mother whose baneful influence had corrupted his whole nature, and forced him to exchange his dreams of glory for eternal infamy, yet lacking the resolution to free himself from her control. By his side, his Queen,

[1] "On All Hallows' Eve," writes L'Estoile, "the King of Navarre was playing tennis with the Duc de Guise, when the scant consideration which was shown this little prisoner of a kinglet, at whom he threw all kinds of jests and taunts, as though he were a simple page or lackey of the Court, deeply pained a number of honest people who were watching them play."

the saintly Elizabeth of Austria, perhaps the one pure and noble figure in the midst of that abominable Court, "an angel astray in hell, who did not even suspect the brutal passions, the ferocious hatreds, at work upon this terrible and brilliant stage."[1] Behind them, the Queen-Mother, freed at last from the dread which had haunted her like a spectre for so many months; placid, good-humoured, exquisitely courteous; surely the most gentle-mannered woman who ever planned a deed of blood; always with a smile on her lips, whatever dark schemes she might be revolving in her mind; perpetually talking, writing, reading, or entertaining; a great gourmand, "gluttonous even to the verge of ferocity,"[2] to counteract the effects of which, she took a great deal of exercise, walking so fast that it was difficult for her ladies to keep up with her. With her, her two younger sons—*Arcades ambo:* Henri d'Anjou, "her idol and contenting her in everything she desired of him;" who, like her, "divided in order to reign," and after having reduced France to a welter of anarchy, was to die by the poniard of a crazy monk, hated and despised; who had gifts which, in another age or with a different training,

[1] Imbert de Saint-Amant, *des femmes de la Cour des derniers Valois.*

[2] In 1549, the sheriffs of Paris entertained Catherine to a "collation," at which figured peacocks, pheasants, swans, pullets, young rabbits, quails, capons, pigs, pigeons, and leverets, and the Queen nearly died of an indigestion, in consequence of having partaken too freely of a "*ratatouille de crêtes, rognons de coqs, et fonds d'artichauds.*"—Cimber et Danjou, *Archives curieuses de l'histoire de France*, cited by M. Charles Merki, *La Reine Margot et le fin des Valois.* One would have supposed that after this unpleasant experience, her Majesty would in future have avoided such dangerous delicacies, but such was not the case, since, twenty years later, L'Estoile reports that Catherine had had another narrow escape, her illness being attributed to over-indulgence in an almost precisely similar dish.

ELIZABETH OF AUSTRIA, QUEEN OF FRANCE

From an Engraving after a Drawing attributed to JANET
in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

Femme de Roi Charles IX
R.
Ad Reprobé

might have made of him a shrewd and capable king; but who is remembered only for his follies and vices: his miserable effeminacy, his shameful debauchery, his falseness, cruelty, and hypocrisy. And the puny, ill-shaped, pock-marked Alençon, "perhaps the basest of the base Valois-Medici brood;" lacking the generous instincts and the cultured tastes of Charles and the personal courage of Henri; jealous, meddlesome, and ambitious, and so false that his sister Marguerite, in spite of her devoted attachment to him, was betrayed into declaring that "if all treachery were banished from the earth, he would be able to restock it."

Near the Royal Family, the Duc de Guise, gay, debonair, and surpassing all the nobles of the Court in elegance and luxury, yet concealing beneath the exterior of a man of pleasure, a devouring ambition, and ever on the watch for an opportunity of restoring to his family their lost supremacy.

And in the background, a motley crowd of adventurers, cutthroats, and courtesans, rubbing shoulders with the greatest nobles and ladies in France, many of whom in their unscrupulousness and depravity of life differed little from them. The licentiousness which prevailed was appalling, and not the smallest attempt was made to conceal it. Vice was, indeed, the mode; virtue, even ordinary decency, was mocked and derided. "In that Court, common sin seemed too near virtue to please, and he was reckoned to show little spirit who was content to be the gallant of but one adulteress." To laxity of morals was joined a violence of manners difficult to credit; assassinations, duels, sanguinary brawls, were of daily occurrence. In this respect the princes, and even the King himself, set a shameful example, parading the streets, accompanied by their favourites, ill-treating inoffensive

citizens, insulting women, and committing all kinds of outrages. On one occasion, Charles IX., Anjou, the King of Navarre, and their attendants stormed and sacked the house of a gentleman who had offended *Monsieur* by refusing to marry his cast-off mistress. On another, the same illustrious personages, accompanied by Henri d'Angoulême, invited themselves to dinner with Nantouillet, the Provost of Paris, and robbed him of all his silver plate. Their visit, L'Estoile tells us, no less than their conduct, greatly incommoded the worthy magistrate, who happened to have chosen that very day for the removal of a rival in love or business, for which purpose he had concealed four bravos in his house. The bravos, hearing the noise made by their employer's riotous guests, imagined themselves discovered and were on the point of rushing out of their hiding-place, pistol in hand.

If circumstances occasionally drove Marguerite and Henri into close alliance, they were none the less an ill-assorted pair and, as is so often the case with victims of political exigency, far from happy. What more complete contrast, indeed, could be imagined than these two persons! The one, reared in the artificial atmosphere of the Valois Court, spoiled from her cradle by over-strained flattery, mobile, impressionable, irritable, capricious, greedy for pleasure and admiration, constantly seeking diversions and novelties; the other, a child of Nature, "brought up without delicacy and with no superfluities," trained from early childhood to live on the simplest fare, to endure the heat of summer and the frosts of winter, and to despise fatigue and danger; as much out of place amid the effeminate exquisites of the French Court as an eagle of his own mountains among a troupe of peacocks.

Although Marguerite affected to despise the curled and

scented *mignons* who thronged the salons of the Louvre, there can be little doubt that the rough Béarnais, with his slight, wiry figure, his piercing eyes, his long nose and pointed chin, careless and even slovenly in his dress, disdaining the pretty compliments and speeches which sound so pleasant to a woman's ear as much as he did the luxuries of the toilet, suffered by the very contrast he presented to these gallants and seemed anything but a desirable husband in her eyes.

And Henri, on his side, made no attempt to gain her affection. However high an opinion we may hold of him as a king of France, he plays a sorry part indeed in Marguerite's history, and proved himself the worst of husbands. One often sees men married to celebrated beauties preferring women much less attractive. It was so with the King of Navarre. From the very first days of his marriage he neglected his wife and plunged into a succession of amours, more or less discreditable, since the genuine affection which redeemed, in some degree, the *liaisons* of later years with *la belle* Corisande and Gabrielle d'Estrées seems to have had little or no part in them. Moreover, so far from seeking to conceal his irregularities from Marguerite, he spoke of them freely in her presence, and did not hesitate to make her the confidante of his gallantries.

United to a husband to whom she was utterly indifferent and who treated her in this manner, unable to turn for counsel and aid to her mother and brothers, it is scarcely surprising that Marguerite should have succumbed to the temptations which surrounded her, and that she should have begun to indulge in highly dangerous flirtations, which furnished abundant material for malicious gossip.

The most favoured of the young Queen's admirers appears to have been a handsome young Provençal named La Môle, in the service of her brother Alençon, who enjoyed the distinction of being the most elegant dancer at the Court. In the balls at the Louvre, he and Marguerite might often be seen dancing together, with a grace which aroused general admiration. A singular character was this La Môle, a strange compound of accomplishments and vices, debauchery and superstition. L'Estoile tells us that he devoted most of his time to gallantry, but never neglected attending Mass, not only once but several times daily, being firmly convinced that, if he permitted a single day to pass, even when campaigning, without hearing it, he would most certainly be damned ; and, on the other hand, that Mass devoutly listened to expiated all sins and adulteries that he might commit. The chronicler adds that Charles IX. used to remark that one might keep a register of the debauches of La Môle by counting the times he went to Mass.

M. de Saint-Poncy declares that " nothing proves that their relations exceeded the bounds of the *haute galanterie* in vogue at this epoch," but the majority of writers are not of this opinion. However that may be, their connection, as we shall presently see, was to furnish one of the most tragic episodes of the end of the reign, and poor La Môle to provide a striking illustration of the truth of Don Juan's *mot*, that Marguerite's charms were better calculated to ruin men than to save them.

In the meanwhile, the fourth civil war had broken out—a revolt of the Huguenot cities of the South and West rather than a war. They made an heroic and desperate resistance, and La Rochelle sustained a siege of

nearly four months, which cost the besiegers nearly 20,000 men, including the Duc d'Aumale. Finally, through the mediation of La Noue, the citizens, in order to save the dignity of Anjou, who commanded the royal army, agreed to express regret for their conduct, and the siege was raised.

The Court, indeed, was in no condition to carry on the war. It was becoming daily more evident that the St. Bartholomew had been not only a crime, but a blunder of the most fatal kind. The moderate Catholics throughout France were shocked and horrified; while the Montmorencies and the leaders of the Third Party were convinced that the Queen-Mother intended their ruin after that of the Bourbons and Châtillons. The result was a *rapprochement* between the "*Politiques*" and the Huguenots, which threatened serious danger to Catherine's plans. The secret head of this confederacy was the Duc d'Alençon, who had long chafed under the subjection to which his brothers' dislike and his mother's indifference had relegated him, and was determined to assert himself at all hazards. Alençon, who had taken no part in the massacre of August 24, and had even openly censured it, had been, since 1571, a candidate for the hand of Elizabeth of England, the suggested alliance meeting with much apparent favour from the astute Queen, though she probably never had the least intention of entering into it. He had, at one time, conceived the project of escaping from the Court and taking refuge in England; but his intentions were suspected and he was kept under close surveillance. The King even opened the letters which he received from Elizabeth and dictated the replies to his brother, to the latter's intense mortification. Compelled to betake himself, together with Navarre and

Condé, to the siege of La Rochelle, he there quarrelled so violently with Anjou that they were with difficulty prevented from coming to blows; and, subject as he was to constant restraint and humiliations, the young prince was ripe for any mischief.

In the early summer of 1573, Elizabeth intimated to the French Court that, unless peace were concluded, she would break off the negotiations for her marriage with Alençon and send English troops to the assistance of the Huguenots. This threat, coupled with the election of Anjou to the Polish throne, induced Catherine to return to a pacific policy, and, in July, the Edict of Boulogne granted to the Protestants even greater concessions than they had been promised by the Peace of Saint-Germain. But Alençon and Henry of Navarre remained the secret chiefs of the Huguenots and disaffected Catholics, and during the remainder of the reign of Charles IX., there were nothing but rebellions, conspiracies, arrests, and executions.

On August 19, 1573, the Polish envoys charged to offer the Crown to Anjou arrived in Paris and made a sensational entry, by way of the Porte Saint-Antoine. They numbered over one hundred and fifty gentlemen; some riding in chariots drawn by four and even six horses, whose harness was ornamented with silver; others on horseback, their saddles and trappings decorated with gold and silver lace, while their bits were of silver and their bridles set with jewels. Nearly all of them were of great stature, with long beards, which added not a little to their imposing appearance, and wore costumes of cloth-of-gold and silver, tall sable caps decorated with jewelled aigrettes, and high boots of yellow leather.

Long scimitars hung by their side, and every one carried at his back a bow and a quiver of arrows.

After having traversed the Rue Saint-Martin, in which triumphal arches bearing inscriptions in their honour, composed by the Court poet, Jean Daurat, had been erected, they came to a halt in the Rue des Augustins, at the Hôtel of the Provost of Paris, Nantouillet, who welcomed the chief of the embassy, the Bishop of Posen. Thence they proceeded to the Louvre to salute the King, the Queen, and Catherine, who came to meet them dressed in cloth-of-gold and preceded by their pages and equerries, bearing wands of iron four or five feet long. Next they were conducted to the King and Queen of Navarre, and the latter, who was arrayed in the confection which we have described elsewhere,[1] made so great an impression upon the susceptible Poles, that one of them, Albert Laski, was heard to declare, as he withdrew with his colleagues, that, after being privileged to gaze upon such marvellous beauty, he did not wish to behold any object again.

Later in the day, the Queen-Mother entertained the envoys to a magnificent banquet in the garden of the Tuileries, in which she had caused a "pavilion of verdure" to be erected; while in the evening there was a ball, in which figured sixteen nymphs, representing the sixteen provinces of France. These nymphs, after delighting the company with their dancing, recited verses composed by Ronsard and Daurat in praise of France and the new King of Poland, and then presented to every one present a gold medal "large as the palm of one's hand, on which were engraved the products and singularities in which each province was most fertile."[2]

[1] See p. 31 *supra*.

[2] Brantôme.

The new King of Poland seemed in no hurry to take possession of his throne, and manifested very little enthusiasm for what he regarded as a kind of exile, far removed from the Court of the Valois and the pleasures which he held so dear. He was at this time desperately enamoured of Marie de Clèves, the young Princesse de Condé, whom he had made his mistress, and the prospect of parting from his beloved was extremely distasteful to him. Moreover, the Court physicians had pronounced the unhappy Charles consumptive, and it was obvious that his days were numbered. In the event of his brother's death, Henri's absence might entail, in the present troubled state of the kingdom, serious consequences, and quite possibly result in Alençon seizing the throne. These considerations led him to linger in Paris more than a month after the visit of the Polish envoys, and he would no doubt have postponed his departure still further, had not Charles, who, since the St. Bartholomew, had regarded all the chief actors in that sanguinary drama, and Anjou in particular, with loathing and hatred, informed him one day that France was not large enough to hold them both, and that, "if he did not go of his own free will, he would make him go by force." To ensure the departure of his detested brother, the King accompanied him as far as Vitry, where he was attacked by fever and unable to proceed further. Catherine parted from her favourite son at La Fère. "Go, my son," said she, as she bade him adieu. "Go; you will not be long absent."

On the eve of his departure for Poland, Anjou judging it prudent to secure Marguerite's good-will, or, at any rate, her neutrality, during his absence from France, endeavoured to effect a reconciliation with his sister and

'strove by every means to make her forget the evil effects of his ingratitude." But her painful experience during the Guise affair had taught Marguerite to know her brother, and she did not allow herself to be deceived by his protestations and promises.

CHAPTER IX

Attempt of Henri of Navarre and Alençon to escape from the Court revealed by Marguerite—The conspiracy of the "*Politiques*"—Failure of Guitry's *coup de main* at Saint-Germain —Marguerite's responsibility for this—Panic-stricken flight of the Court to Paris—The two princes again endeavour to escape —They are arrested, together with their accomplices La Môle and Coconnas — Criminal proceedings commenced against La Môle and Coconnas—They are put to the "question"—Able *Mémoire justicatif* on behalf of her husband drawn up by the Queen of Navarre—Her generous offer to assist one of the princes to escape from Vincennes—Vigorous measures adopted by Catherine against the rebels—Execution of La Môle and Coconnas—Their behaviour on the scaffold—Marguerite's grief at the death of La Môle—A curious story —Remorse of Charles IX. for the St. Bartholomew—His illness and death—His funeral.

Scarcely had Anjou departed than fresh troubles arose. Alençon and Henri of Navarre attempted to escape from the Court, with the intention of putting themselves at the head of the "*Politiques*" and Huguenots. But on the evening of the day fixed for their enterprise, Miossans, the gentleman whose life Marguerite had saved during the St. Bartholomew, informed the young Queen of the intentions of her husband and brother and she, in turn, hastened to warn Catherine. "The Huguenots," she writes, "now proposed to them [Alençon and Henri] to escape, as the King and the Queen my mother were passing through Champagne, and join

certain troops, which, it was arranged, should come to meet them. M. de Miossans, a Catholic gentleman,[1] having been informed of this project, which was prejudicial to the interests of the King his master, gave me warning of it, to prevent consequences which would have brought so many evils on themselves and on the realm. I went at once to find the King and the Queen my mother, and told them that I had something of the greatest importance to communicate to them, but that I would not divulge it, unless it pleased them to promise me that it should bring no harm to those concerned, and unless they would take precautions without appearing to be aware of anything . . . . This the King and Queen vouchsafed to me; and this affair was managed with such discretion, that, without their being able to ascertain whence the hindrance proceeded, they could never get an opportunity of effecting their escape." [2]

It is not easy to understand Marguerite's motives in thus betraying her husband and her favourite brother, notwithstanding her protestation that she was really acting in their interests, as well as in those of the State. But we should remember that the conflicting ties of birth and marriage placed her in a very embarrassing position; both parties had claims on her allegiance, and it was practically impossible for her to be true to the one without injuring the other; while her marriage had not emancipated her from the rule of her mother, to whom she continued to render the most implicit obedience. Probably, as her latest biographer, M. Charles Merki, thinks, she sacrificed the hazardous

[1] Miossans had no doubt reverted to the Old Faith, like his master, from motives of prudence.

[2] *Mémoires de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

projects of her husband and Alençon, partly through a kind of *esprit de famille*, and partly through the fear of being herself gravely compromised by their designs.[1]

However that may be, all her conduct at this period is very difficult to justify, and the means whereby she brought about the failure of the conspiracy of the "*Politiques*," of which we are about to speak, and caused the death of the man who then possessed her affections, reveal her in a very unfavourable light.

Favoured by the illness of the King and the departure of Anjou for Poland, a vast conspiracy enveloped the country. Montgommery, who had escaped from Paris during the St. Bartholomew and had taken refuge in England, was to make a descent on the Norman coast; Louis of Nassau to invade France from the Netherlands; the Duc de Bouillon to open the gates of Sedan; La Noue to occupy the fortresses of Poitou; Montbrun to make himself master of Dauphiné; while d'Amville, the Governor of Languedoc, which he ruled with almost sovereign authority, had promised to maintain an attitude of friendly neutrality towards the Huguenots of that province and of Guienne. Finally, a bold Huguenot chief, the Sieur de Guitry—Bertichères, at the head of several hundred men, was charged to force the gates of the Château of Saint-Germain, where the Court had been residing since its return from Vitry, and carry off Alençon and Henri of Navarre.

The plans of the conspirators were carefully laid; but Guitry's enterprise, on which the success of the whole movement hinged, failed through his own precipitation. Owing to some misunderstanding, Guitry anticipated the day, and appeared with his men in the environs of

[1] *La Reine Margot et le fin de Valois*, p. 85.

Saint-Germain, some time before he was expected. Catherine's suspicion was at once aroused. She had a consummate experience of intrigues and an unrivalled skill in unravelling the tangled threads of even the most intricate. Soon she was in possession of the whole plot. Some writers assert that the pusillanimous Alençon, fearing that he was on the point of being detected, gave way to such terror that his confidant, La Môle, under the impression that all was lost, and anxious to purchase his own safety, revealed the conspiracy to the Queen-Mother. This is the view adopted by Marguerite's biographer, M. de Saint-Poncy, always very reluctant to believe anything to the detriment of the princess. But the most generally accepted version is that Marguerite, urged on by Catherine, who did not scruple to employ the most questionable methods to attain her ends, prevailed upon the infatuated La Môle to tell her everything, and immediately informed her mother.

Catherine acted with energy and decision. She sent for Alençon, reproached him bitterly with his treachery, and ordered him to make a full confession, which the pusillanimous prince did forthwith. She also summoned Henri of Navarre to her cabinet, and severely admonished him. The gates of the château were closed ; the drums of the Swiss and of the King's guards beat to quarters, and preparations were made with all possible speed for the departure of the Court for Paris.

It was nine o'clock in the evening of February 23, 1574, when Catherine learned of what was intended. By two o'clock on the following morning, everything was in readiness, and the Court set out for Paris. The King travelled in a litter, surrounded by the Swiss in battle array, as during the retreat from Meaux ; the

Queen-Mother followed in her coach, and the King of Navarre and Alençon, "whom," says Marguerite, "she did not treat with quite so much tenderness as upon the former occasion," had received preremptory orders to accompany her; while another coach contained the Queens Elizabeth and Marguerite. The utmost consternation prevailed, and the Catholic courtiers fled terror-stricken, in the full belief that the avengers of the St. Bartholomew were behind them. Some galloped madly along the high road; others hurried to the river and took to the boats they found there; every kind of conveyance to be found in the neighbourhood was pressed into the service of the fugitives, and those unable to procure one travelled on foot, expecting every moment to be overtaken by the Huguenots and cut to pieces. The Cardinals de Bourbon, de Lorraine, and de Guise, the Chancellor Birague and the Minister Morvilliers, escaped on horse-back, "clinging to their saddle-bows with both hands, as frightened of their horses as of their enemies."

This panic-stricken flight terminated at Paris, where the King and Queen-Mother went to lodge at the Hôtel de Retz, believing that they would be in greater security there than at the Louvre or the Tuileries. Early in April, Charles left Paris to shut himself up at Vincennes, with the Swiss as his guard, taking with him Alençon and Navarre, who were kept under close observation. Every day brought fresh intelligence of the troubled state of the country, and soon Catherine, ever on the alert, learned that the two princes, undeterred by the failure of their previous efforts to escape, were planning yet a third attempt, with the connivance of La Môle and another of Alençon's favourites, the Comte de Coconnas,

a Piedmontese adventurer, who had earned an unenviable notoriety by his atrocious cruelty during the St. Bartholomew.[1]

Both the princes were promptly arrested and imprisoned in the keep of Vincennes, while La Môle and Coconnas were likewise apprehended, together with Cosmo Ruggieri, the Queen-Mother's astrologer, who was implicated in their designs. A wax figure, said to resemble the King, pierced through the heart and the eye by needles, was found at La Môle's lodging, and this was made the basis of a charge of attempting to procure Charles IX.'s death by magic. "Make Cosmo tell everything," wrote Catherine, on April 19, to the *procureur-général* La Guesle, "that we may know the truth about the King's illness." And, in another letter, she writes: "They tell me that he (Cosmo) has fashioned an image of wax, which he has pierced through the heart, and they say that it is to injure the King." [2]

A commission composed of members of the Parlement of Paris, was appointed to examine the princes, with Président de Thou at its head, while criminal proceedings were commenced against the others. The Queen-

[1] He is said to have promised several Huguenots their lives, on condition that they would renounce their religion; and when his helpless victims had performed what he required of them, to have poniarded them with his own hands.

[2] In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, belief in sorcery was, of course, practically universal. During the siege of Paris, in 1588, Guise's sister, the Duchess of Montpensier, had a little image of Henri III. made, which she pierced from time to time with a gold pin. The famous Maréchal de Biron practised sorcery with La Fin, and it was asserted, in the course of his trial, that, in conjunction with this same La Fin, he made waxen figures, to which he addressed the following formula: "Impious King, you shall perish; as the wax melts, so you shall waste away!"

Mother was determined to leave no stone unturned to discredit Henri of Navarre, Marguerite, and Alençon with Charles IX., in order that the claims of the King of Poland might be strengthened. By ruining them, she would assure her own power and that of her favourite son.

La Môle, when interrogated, denied everything with which he was charged. He was put to the "*question*," the boot being used with merciless severity; but he did not cease to affirm that he had conspired neither against the King's life nor his authority. All that he had done, he said, was to favour the escape of the princes, the chief responsibility for which, however, he threw upon Guillaume de Montmorency, the youngest of the four brothers, who had prudently taken to flight. No witness could wring from him any admission which might compromise his master or Henri of Navarre.

Asked for an explanation concerning the wax figure found at his lodging, he declared that it was intended to represent not the King, but a young girl of Provence, and that he had pierced it to the heart, on the advice of Cosmo Ruggieri, in order to gain the love of the said damsel.[1]

Coconnas was less firm, and, in the anguish of torture, compromised a number of important personages, including Condé, the Duc de Montmorency, and Thevales, the Governor of Metz.

The commission appointed to examine the princes obtained from Alençon a full confession of his part in the affair. But Henri of Navarre showed more courage, and made a deposition, drawn up with much address and dignity, which he owed to his wife's skilful pen. In

[1] D'Aubigné, *Histoire universelle*, iv.

this memoir, after having enumerated all the ill-usage and injuries to which he had been subjected since the St. Bartholomew, the marks of contempt and dislike which the Queen-Mother had shown him, and the perils which surrounded him in the midst of this troubled Court, he admitted that he had really intended, in company with his brother-in-law, to seek safety in flight. The preservation of his life, he contended, imperatively demanded such a step. He defended himself, however, energetically from ever having been concerned in any conspiracy, and declared his unalterable attachment to the person of the King. This skilfully conceived document had the effect of placing Henri in the position of an innocent victim; it was, in fact, a recrimination rather than a justification.

"The *Mémoire justificatif*," remarks M. de Saint-Poncy, "is worthy to be read, and will remain as a masterpiece of luminous exposition, of finesse, of tact, of dignity, and even of eloquence. It is one of the most remarkable instruments of the French language at this epoch, anticipating by twenty years the *Mémoires* of Marguerite, and anterior to the majority of important works of the time, preceding the *Essais* of Montaigne, the treatises of Charron, and the history of d'Aubigné. But it is more than a piece of literature; it is a good action! Marguerite, at this juncture, renders a signal service to the prince whom, contrary to her inclination, she had been forced to espouse; she associated herself with a noble devotion in the ill-fortune of her husband; and perhaps, for the third time, he was indebted to her for his safety." [1]

[1] This document was published by Le Laboureur, in his additions to Castelnau's *Mémoires*, and republished by Mongez, in his *Histoire de*

Nor was the composition of this able memoir the only proof of solicitude which the young Queen gave her husband in his peril, for she conceived the project of assisting one of the royal captives to escape, by a means which has frequently been employed with success in similar circumstances.

. Notwithstanding the severe measures adopted in regard to the prisoners, Marguerite, in her quality of sister to Charles IX., enjoyed the privilege of free access to the keep of Vincennes, where her husband and brother were confined; nor did the guards, out of respect to her, examine the occupants of her coach, or make the women of her suite raise the masks of satin or velvet, which, according to the custom of the time, the ladies of the Court wore when out of doors, less for the purpose of concealing their features than through a belief that the practice served to protect the freshness of their complexions from sun and wind. This custom suggested to her the idea of disguising as a woman one of the two prisoners and making him accompany her out of the château, leaving one of the ladies of her suite in his place. However, her scheme came to nothing. "They were too well watched by the guards for both of them to go," writes Marguerite. "It would have sufficed if one of them had escaped, to guarantee the safety of the other; but, as they could never agree which this one was to be, each desiring to go and refusing to be left behind, the plan could never be put into execution." [1]

The conduct of Henri of Navarre and Alençon in this matter compares very unfavourably with that of the

Marguerite de Valois. It is also given by Guessard in his edition of Marguerite's *Mémoires.*

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

princess, who offered them an example of generosity and devotion which neither had the courage to imitate. But history ought to record with admiration the magnanimity of Marguerite, who was willing to incur the resentment of the King and the Queen-Mother, for the sake of an unworthy brother and of a husband who had so signally failed in the duty he owed her.

In the meanwhile, Catherine had accurately gauged the extent of the danger which threatened her. The "*Politiques*" and Huguenots had issued a manifesto demanding the reform of the government, the assembling of the Estates, and the restoration of the national liberties. But it was obvious that such demands were merely a cloak for their real intentions, and that, should the rising prove successful, the effect would be to deprive the King of Poland of the succession to the throne, which must speedily fall vacant, in favour of the more accommodating Alençon.

Invested with full powers by the illness of the King, Catherine took prompt and energetic measures. The two princes were more vigorously guarded than ever; the Maréchaux de Montmorency and de Cossé, who had had the temerity to come to Court, to endeavour to justify themselves, were arrested and sent to the Bastille, and three armies were despatched against the rebels of Normandy, the South, and central France. In the North, Matignon drove back Montgommery, and forced him to throw himself into Saint-Lo; the Duc de Montpensier took Fontenoy and Lusignan, and the third army, under his son, the Dauphin of Auvergne, held Montbrun in check in that province. "At least," exclaimed the dying King, on his sick-bed at Vincennes, when informed of

the turmoil into which his unhappy kingdom was once more plunged, " they might have waited until my death. But that is too much to expect ! "

In those days, the *figurants* generally suffered for the misdeeds of the leading actors in dramas such as this, and Marguerite's ill-starred lover, La Môle, and his fellow-conspirator, Coconnas, had been condemned to death. In 1571, the former had been sent by his master to England to plead the duke's cause with Elizabeth, and his handsome face and adroit compliments had, it is said, so delighted the " Virgin Queen," as to seriously alarm the reigning favourite, the ambitious Leicester. However that may be, Elizabeth, through Valentine Dale, her Ambassador at the French Court, intervened actively on behalf of this fascinating gallant, and besought Catherine, as a personal favour, to mitigate his punishment. But the Queen-Mother detested La Môle, who had been the intermediary between the Montmorencies and Alençon, and replied that her son had pardoned his subjects who had revolted for the cause of their religion, but that such was not the case with La Môle, " who had been nourished at the Court for years, had eaten of their bread, and had been treated by the King not as a subject, but as a companion." According to the English Ambassador, Alençon also intervened on behalf of his two favourites, and having been admitted to an audience by the King, went on his knees to implore him to spare their lives. All, however, was in vain, for, though Dale succeeded in obtaining from Charles the concession that the condemned men should not be subjected to the ignominy of a public execution, and that a few days' respite should be accorded them, the messenger despatched with these orders from Vincennes, found the

Porte Saint-Antoine closed, and when he had at length succeeded in obtaining admission, it was too late. Acting, without doubt, under secret orders from Catherine, who feared that the King might, after all, relent, the First President of the Parlement had given instructions for the execution to take place at an earlier hour than that originally fixed; and the condemned men were hurried off to the Place de Grève, and beheaded immediately on their arrival there, without even their sentence being read, as was customary.

La Môle was the first to die, and his last words revealed the singular and profane compound of devotion and gallantry in which his life had been passed. "May God and the Blessed Virgin have mercy on my soul!" cried he. And then, turning to the executioner and his assistants, he added: "Commend me to the good graces of the Queen of Navarre and the ladies!"

In the torture-chamber, as we have seen, La Môle had shown much courage and endurance, while Coconnas had been very speedily induced to confess all he knew. But on the scaffold their positions were reversed. When the supreme moment arrived, and the cross was handed to him by the priest in attendance, the Provençal trembled so violently that he was unable to carry it to his lips, or even to hold it. The Piedmontese, on the other hand, met death with a firm countenance, "like the murderer that he was," remarking that "it was necessary that great captains of great enterprises should die in this fashion for the service of the great." [1]

[1] L'Estoile, edit. Michaud, i. 30. Charles IX., on hearing that he was dead, observed: "Coconnas was a gentleman, a valiant man, and a brave captain, but a villain, aye, I believe, one of the greatest villains in my realm." The King had not forgotten that worthy's exploits during

As for the astrologer, Cosmo Ruggieri, he escaped with a shaven head—the usual punishment of sorcerers—and a few months in the galleys, "for," says d'Aubigné, "the Queen [Catherine] had favoured him, and made use of those of that profession." [1]

Marguerite had been, in a great measure, responsible for the death of La Môle, for, though Catherine had pardoned him at Saint-Germain, she had never forgiven him his share in the affair, and he had been from that moment a suspected person, always under the closest surveillance, and destined for exemplary punishment, if detected in any fresh transgression. Fickle, but, nevertheless, sincere in her passing attachments, the young Queen is said to have carried her grief to the verge of absurdity. If we are to believe the Duc de Nevers, or rather Gomberville, the editor of the *Mémoires* bearing his name, Marguerite and her friend the Duchesse de Nevers, by whom Coconnas had been "well treated," caused the heads of their hapless lovers to be perfumed and embalmed in order to have always before them these precious souvenirs of their amours. And the author of the *Divorce satyrique*—not, however, a chronicler very worthy of credit—makes Henri IV. say: "La Môle left his head at Saint-Jean-en-Grève, in company with that of Coconnas, where, however, they did not moulder nor remain long exposed to the gaze of the populace, since

the St. Bartholomew, of which he is said to have boasted, even in his Majesty's presence.

[1] Du Vair relates that Catherine had placed Cosmo Ruggieri in Alençon's household, under pretence of teaching the prince Italian, but, in reality, to spy upon him. Everything goes to prove that the Florentine was an *agent-provocateur*, and that his punishment was merely a concession to public opinion, for which he was no doubt amply indemnified subsequently.

the following night my prudish wife—Queen Margot—and her companion Madame de Nevers, the faithful mistress of Coconnas, having caused them to be carried off,[1] bore them in their coaches to inter them, with their own hands, in the Chapel of Saint-Martin, which stands at the foot of Montmartre. The death of La Môle cost his mistress many tears, and, under the name of Hyacinthe, she caused her regrets to be long sung,[2] notwithstanding the frequent and nocturnal consolations of Saint-Luc."

The end of the troubled reign of Charles IX. was at hand. Ever since the St. Bartholomew, the unhappy King had been a changed man ; he himself was the most pitiable victim of the foul deed which had been committed in his name, a prey to agonies of shame and remorse, which gave him no respite either by day or night. " His looks have become sad," wrote the Venetian Ambassador, Cavalli ; " in his conversation and in his audiences, he cannot look those who address him in the face ; he bends his head, closes his eyes ; then suddenly opens them, and, as though that movement caused him pain, closes them again with not less rapidity."[3] He declared to his surgeon, Ambroise Paré, that he had always before him, whether sleeping or awake, the vision of all those

[1] A gentleman of Auvergne, Jacques d'Oradour by name, who at this time occupied the post of *mâitre d'hôtel* to the Queen of Navarre, and was killed at the Battle of Issoire, in 1590, is mentioned as the person who abstracted the severed heads of La Môle and Coconnas.

[2] According to Mongez, Marguerite, to console herself for the loss of La Môle, engaged the famous Du Perron, afterwards cardinal, to celebrate his death in verse, and it is of him of whom he speaks, under the name of Hyacinthe, in a *chanson* composed in 1574.

[3] Cited by Armand Baschet, *la Diplomatie vénetienne.*

slaughtered corpses, "presenting themselves with hideous faces and covered with blood." And he added: "I would that the imbecile and the innocent had been spared!" D'Aubigné relates that, a week after the massacre, a large flock of crows were observed perched on the towers and gables of the Louvre; and the conscience-stricken King believed that their hoarse cries were a demand for another such banquet as they had lately tasted. That same night, two hours after retiring to rest, Charles suddenly started from his bed, called upon his attendants to rise, and sent for Henri of Navarre and others, to listen to a confused noise, a concert of shouts, shrieks, and groans, such as had echoed through the streets of Paris on the night of the massacre. All who were present heard the turmoil; indeed, so loud was it that the King, in the belief that some disturbance had broken out in the city, under the leadership of the Montmorencies and their partisans, ordered his guards to hasten into the streets and quell it. But they returned, declaring that the city was perfectly tranquil, and that the air only was troubled. And this disturbance, we are told, continued every night for a week, commencing always at the same hour.

In the hope of escaping these nightmares, the King sought relief in the wildest physical exertions. "He wishes to tire himself out at all cost; he remains on horseback for twelve or fourteen consecutive hours; he proceeds thus, chasing and coursing through the woods the same beast, the stag, for two or three days at a time, never pausing save to partake of food, never reposing save for a moment at night."[1] At other times, he would enter a forge and, stripped to the waist, labour at the

[1] Cavalli, cited by Armand Baschet, *la Diplomatie vénetienne*.

CHARLES IX., KING OF FRANCE

From an Engraving after a Drawing by an unknown artist, in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

fashioning of helm or cuirass, until the perspiration poured in rivulets down his body, and his attendants gazed at him in horror, as at a man possessed.

But the only peace he found was death ; for, aided by these physical excesses, the germs of consumption, which had long lain latent within him, developed rapidly, and soon he knew that his end was near. In the autumn of 1573, he was attacked by small-pox, and, though he recovered, his strength thenceforth failed completely, and, in the early spring of the following year, he is described by the English Ambassador as " no more than skin and bone," and so weak as to be unable to stand. At the beginning of May, he took to his bed, and never left it again. In the night of the 22nd to the 23rd, he had a violent attack of hæmorrhage, which reduced him to a pitiable state of exhaustion, and it was seen that the end was only a question of days. On the 28th, he summoned his chief physician, Mazillac, and pathetically inquired whether it were not possible that he and all the other great doctors in the realm could find some alleviation for his sufferings, " since," he added, " I am horribly and cruelly tormented." To which Mazillac replied, " very wisely and piously that all that depended on their art they had done, omitting nothing, and that only the previous day, all those of their Faculty had met in consultation to find some remedy ; but that, to tell the truth, God was the great and sovereign physician in such maladies, to whom one ought to have recourse, and that it was His outstretched hand which he ought to recognise, in order to humiliate himself beneath it, and await pardon and relief." " I believe what you say is true," rejoined the King, " and that you know no other remedy."[1]

[1] *Journal de L'Estoile* (edit. Michaud), i. 303.

On the 29th, he dictated a letter to Matignon, who was closely besieging Montgommery, bidding him obey the orders of the Queen-Mother, since he himself was no longer in a condition to issue them. That night he became much worse, and Mazillac ordered all to leave the sick-room, with the exception of two of his favourite attendants and his old nurse, to whom, notwithstanding that she was a Huguenot, Charles was greatly attached. "As she, having seated herself on a chest, was on the point of falling asleep," relates L'Estoile, "she heard the King complaining, upon which she approached very softly, and drew back his curtains. The King began to say to her, heaving a great sigh and weeping so violently, that the sobs choked his words: 'Ah, nurse, *ma mie*, nurse! What bloodshed and what murders! Ah! what evil counsel I have had! O my God, pardon me for them, and have pity on me, if it please Thee! I know not where I am, so much do they perplex and trouble me. What will become of all this? What shall I do? I am lost; I know it well.' Then his nurse said to him: 'Sire, let the murders and the blood be on the heads of those who forced you to commit them, and on those who gave you evil counsel. But, as for you, Sire, you are not responsible, and, since you did not approve of them, and since you regretted them, as you have just protested, believe that God will never lay them to your charge; and that, in earnestly asking pardon of Him, as you do, He will accord it you, and will cover them with the mantle of His Son, to whom alone you must have recourse.'"

The following morning, news reached Paris that Montgommery, the involuntary murderer of Henri II., had surrendered, Catherine hurried to the King's bed-side

to inform him of the fact; but Charles scarcely seemed to hear her. "What," cried she, "is it nothing to you, my son, that the man who slew your father is a prisoner?" To which the King replied that it was a matter of indifference to him, like all else, and, turning his face to the wall, asked to be left in peace.

Later in the day, he roused himself, and sent for Alençon, the King of Navarre, the Cardinal de Bourbon, the Chancellor, Birague, and some other Ministers and gentlemen; and having reminded them that the Salic Law debarred his infant daughter[1] from the succession, declared the King of Poland his lawful heir and successor, and his mother Regent until his return to France.

During the night, he was in great suffering, and it was seen that he would not live through the following day. He called Henri of Navarre, to whom he spoke for some time, in a low voice, commending to his care his wife Elizabeth and her little daughter, and also his son by his beloved mistress, Marie Touchet, who afterwards became Comte d'Auvergne and later Duc d'Angoulême. "My brother," said the dying man to the Béarnais, kneeling by his pillow, "you are losing a good friend. If I had believed what I was told, you would be no longer alive. Do not trust . . ." "Monsieur," hastily broke in Catherine, who had been straining her ears to catch her son's words, "do not say that!"

Towards mid-day—it was Whit-Sunday, May 30—he summoned his mother to his bed-side, and bade her a brief farewell; and at four o'clock in the afternoon he died, within a little less than a month of completing his twenty-fourth year.

[1] Marie Isabelle de France, died April 2, 1578.

The pathetic end of Charles IX. was received with regret both by Court and city; for, notwithstanding his violent and erratic temper, the deceased King had enjoyed some measure of popularity with his subjects, who infinitely preferred to be ruled by him than by the effeminate and dissolute prince whom his premature death had called to the throne. But by no one was he more sincerely mourned than by his sister, the young Queen of Navarre, who tells us that she lost in him "all that it was possible for her to lose," and saw herself deprived of her chief support against her mother's tyranny and her elder brother's enmity.

The obsequies of the hapless young monarch were celebrated with the customary magnificence. But the spirit of discord, which had made of his reign one long succession of wars, conspiracies, and assassinations followed him even to the grave. As the cortège emerged from Notre-Dame to proceed to Saint-Denis, there arose a violent dispute between the upper clergy and the chief officials of the Parlement of Paris, on the question of precedence. This ordinarily belonged to the clergy; but the magistrates insisted that, on the present occasion, it appertained to them, as the representatives of the absent King. So acrimonious became the dispute, that, rather than give way, both parties decided to take no further share in the proceedings, and, accordingly, withdrew in a body, being followed by nearly the whole of the nobility. Brantôme, Fumel, and the Italian soldier Strozzi, were the only persons of note who accompanied the coffin to Saint-Denis, where it was met by the monks of the abbey, with the Cardinal de Lorraine, their abbot, at their head, and lowered into the vaults in which slept so many rulers of France.

CHAPTER X

Measures taken by Catherine to secure the succession for the King of Poland—Execution of Montgommery—Flight of Henri III. from Cracow—He visits Vienna and Italy before returning to France—Meeting between the new King and the Royal Family at Bourgoin—His reception of Henri of Navarre and Alençon—Impressions of Marguerite—The Queen of Navarre accused by Henri III. of "a very dangerous form of benevolence" at Lyons—Stormy interview between Marguerite and the Queen-Mother—The Princess succeeds in establishing her innocence—Apparent harmony re-established in the Royal Family—Death of the Duchess of Savoy and of the Princesse de Condé—Extravagant grief of Henri III. at the loss of his mistress—The Court leaves Lyons for Avignon—Disaster on the Rhône—At Avignon the King takes to devotion and joins the Flagellants—Death of the Cardinal de Lorraine—Coronation of Henri III.—His marriage with Louise de Vaudémont—The King endeavours to compel François de Luxembourg to marry a former mistress of his Majesty—The Court returns to Paris—Death of Claude de Valois, Duchess of Lorraine.

On the morrow of the death of Charles IX., Catherine went to the new King: "Do not delay your departure on any consideration, for we have need of you. You know how much I love you, and when I reflect that you will no more budge from us, that makes me remain patient. The late King, your brother, has charged me to preserve this realm for you; I shall spare no endeavour in my power to transmit it to you intact and tranquil."[1]

[1] Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds Dupuy, published by M. Charles Merki.

The Queen-Mother exhibited both energy and ability in securing the succession for her favourite son. She made overtures to La Noue, who was still in arms in Poitou, opened negotiations with the Rochellois, and succeeded in persuading d'Amville to return to his allegiance. Her task was facilitated by the fact that the leaders of the Huguenot-"*Politique*" revolt were in her power; the Maréchaux de Cossé and de Montmorency being safe in the Bastille, and Alençon and Henri of Navarre under watch and ward at Vincennes. Condé, who, some time before the beginning of the rising, had been permitted to retire to his estates, whence he had fled in disguise to Germany, had alone escaped her clutches.

In one instance only did Catherine depart from the conciliatory policy which she had determined to pursue. The gallant Montgommery was brought from Normandy to Paris, tried by the Parlement for high treason, and condemned to a traitor's death. Placed in a tumbril, with his hands tied behind his back, he was conveyed to the Place de Grève, and there beheaded and quartered. The Queen-Mother herself, L'Estoile tells us, witnessed the execution, "and was at length avenged, as she had so long desired, for the death of the late King Henri, her husband."

Although Henri de Valois had only occupied the throne of Poland some nine months, he was already heartily tired of his kingdom, both the people and the customs of which were utterly distasteful to one of his indolent and luxurious temperament, and had been impatiently awaiting the event which should recall him to France. So soon, therefore, as the news of his brother's death reached him,[1] he quitted his sombre palace at

[1] Chémerault, one of the couriers despatched by Catherine, travelled

Cracow, secretly, in the middle of the night, accompanied by some of his French attendants, and fled *ventre-à-terre* till he had crossed the Austrian frontier, while his people rose on all sides to bar his passage, and his nobles galloped in pursuit, without being able to overtake their fugitive sovereign. The explanation he subsequently condescended to give of this escapade, was that the condition of France was so disturbed that even a week's delay might imperil his succession. Nevertheless, instead of proceeding straight to Paris, he preferred to travel by way of Vienna and Turin, where he was magnificently entertained by the Duke of Savoy, who retained him for two months. In consequence, it was the beginning of September before he bade farewell to the Duke, whose hospitality had been extravagantly rewarded by the restoration of Pignerol, the gate of Italy, and turned his steps towards the distracted kingdom which he had professed himself so impatient to reach.

At Bourgoin, he was met by Catherine, with whom were Marguerite and her husband, the Duc d'Alençon, and the greater part of the Court. The two princes had been set at liberty, by Henri's orders, Catherine having first exacted an oath from them that they would "neither attempt nor originate anything to the detriment of his Majesty the King, and the State of his realm."

The meeting between mother and son was very affectionate; both had obtained the summit of their ambition. After greeting the King, Catherine beckoned Henri of Navarre and *Monsieur*—as Alençon was now called—to approach. "Here," said she, "are two

with such expedition that he made the long journey between Paris and Cracow in thirteen days.

fantastic persons, whom I have had great difficulty in retaining; I hand them over to you! Deal with them as you think fit." His Majesty, at first, received the princes with extreme coldness, and his looks showed plainly the resentment he cherished against them. They, on their side, endeavoured to justify themselves, and warmly protested their devotion. After a while, the King's countenance relaxed, and he embraced the delinquents, exclaiming: "Ah well, brothers! you are free. Love me only, and love yourselves enough to reject the pernicious counsels which will be given you to the detriment of my service, and which will end by ruining you."

Marguerite had assisted at this family meeting, and, in a curious passage in her *Mémoires*, she relates the sensations she experienced at the approach of her new sovereign. "Whilst they [Henri III. and Catherine] were embracing and exchanging greetings," she writes, "although the weather was so hot that, in the crowd in which we stood, we were well-nigh suffocated—I was seized with such a fit of shivering and with such trembling from head to foot that my gentlemen-in-waiting perceived it, and I had great difficulty in controlling it, when the King, turning from the Queen, my mother, advanced to salute me."

The young Queen, who had her full share of the superstition of her time, though she never carried it anything like so far as her mother, regarded this sudden indisposition as a warning of the sufferings she was to undergo during the reign of her detested brother; and it was with a heavy heart that she accompanied the Court to Lyons, into which city Henri III. made his entry on the following day [September 6, 1574]. Nor was it long before her forebodings began to be realised.

One afternoon, Marguerite, accompanied by the Duchesses de Nevers and de Retz, Madame de Curton, who, on the princess's marriage, had exchanged her post of *gouvernante* for that of *dame d'honneur*, and several other ladies and gentlemen, went to visit the Convent de Saint-Pierre, where one of the party had a relative among the nuns. While the Queen and her friends were in the convent, her empty chariot, "easily recognisable from its being guilt and of yellow velvet trimmed with silver," remained in the neighbouring Place des Terreaux, hard by the lodging of a gentleman, whom Marguerite, in her *Mémoires*, speaks of as Bidé, but who, according to Bassompierre, was the fascinating Charles de Balzac d'Entragues, surnamed *le bel* d'Entrygues, one of the young Queen's most devoted admirers.

Presently, as ill-luck would have it, the King passed that way, in company with Henri of Navarre, his favourite François d'O, and the Marquis de Ruffec, on their way to visit another of his Majesty's favourites, Quélus, who was ill. Henri III., recognising his sister's chariot and perceiving that it was empty, thought the opportunity to sow dissension between Marguerite and her husband too good to be lost, and, turning to the King of Navarre, observed with a malicious smile: "Look! There stands your wife's chariot, and yonder is Bidé's lodging. I warrant she is there!" And he ordered Ruffec, "who, as the friend of Du Guast, was the proper instrument for such malignity," to enter the house and ascertain if his suspicions were correct. Ruffec found no one, but, unwilling to baulk his master's design, said to him, on his return: "The birds have been there, but they are now flown."

Marguerite tells us that her husband "manifested on this occasion the kindness and understanding which he always displayed." As a matter of fact, the Béarnais cared not a jot about his wife's gallantries, so long as she left him free to pursue his own, and, moreover, easily divined his Majesty's amiable intentions. But Henri III. succeeded better with Catherine, whom he lost no time in acquainting with her daughter's supposed delinquency. The Queen-Mother, "partly because she believed his story, and partly in order to gratify this son, whom she idolised," became exceedingly angry, and "spoke in a very extraordinary manner before some ladies."

Presently, in blissful ignorance of what had occurred, Marguerite returned, and was met by her husband, who, so soon as he saw her, began to laugh and said: "Go to your mother, and I am sure that you will return thence in a fine rage." She inquired what he meant, to which he rejoined: "I shall not tell you, but let it suffice you that I believe nothing whatever of it, and that they are inventions, in order to deprive me, by this means, of the friendship of *Monsieur* your brother."

"Seeing that I could draw nothing further from him," continues Marguerite, "I repaired to the apartments of the Queen my mother. On entering the reception-room, I encountered M. de Guise, who, looking to the future, was not sorry for the division which was threatening our House, hoping to gather up some spars from the wreck. 'I was waiting for you,' said he, 'to warn you that the Queen credits you with a very dangerous form of benevolence,' and he then repeated to me the foregoing conversation, which he had learned from d'O.[1]

[1] True to the *rôle* which she had marked out for herself, and of

I entered the chamber of the Queen, my mother, but she was not there. I found Madame de Nemours and all the other princesses and ladies, who cried out : '*Mon Dieu*, Madame! the Queen your mother is terribly enraged against you. I do not advise you to present yourself before her.'

"'No,' I replied, 'not if I had done what the King has told her. But, since I am wholly innocent, I must speak to her, in order to enlighten her upon the subject.' "

She then relates how, fortified by the consciousness of her innocence, she entered the Queen-Mother's cabinet, which was only separated from the rest of the room by a thin partition, so that every word that was spoken there could be distinctly heard by those without. No sooner did Catherine catch sight of her daughter, than she "began to open fire, and to say everything that it was possible for extreme and ungovernable anger to fling forth." In vain the unfortunate princess protested that she was the vicitm of a shameful calumny ; in vain she invoked the evidence of the persons who had accompanied her to the Couvent de Saint-Pierre, and had not quitted her during the whole of the afternoon. Catherine "had no ears for either truth or reason," and continued "scolding, raging, and threatening" ; and when Marguerite boldly declared her conviction that it was the King himself whom she must thank for this ill-turn, she became more angry than ever, and asserted that "it was one of her own lackeys who had acquainted her with the facts."

Beside herself with grief and indignation, Marguerite

which we have spoken elsewhere, Marguerite here refuses to recognise the kindly feeling towards the princess to whose hand he had once aspired which had obviously prompted Guise's action.

left her mother and returned to her own apartments. Here she found her husband, who good-naturedly endeavoured to console her, pointing out that she had too many credible witnesses on her side not to be able to establish very speedily her innocence. This was, indeed, what happened; for next day Catherine sent for her daughter, and confessed that she had been misinformed, throwing all the blame on the afore-mentioned lackey, whom she had discovered to be a bad man, and had decided to dismiss from her service. Then, perceiving, by Marguerite's manner, that this stratagem was not succeeding, she employed every means to disabuse her of the idea that the King was the originator of the slander. But the princess was still unconvinced, when his Majesty himself entered, and proceeded to offer her "all the excuses and protestations of friendship that were possible." These demonstrations, though but little sincere, were, of course, followed by a reconciliation, which, at least, procured Marguerite a short respite from the persecutions of her despicable brother.[1]

On their side, the King of Navarre and Alençon were received into some degree of favour, and Henri III. not only ceased to treat them with suspicion, but even assumed an affectionate attitude towards them, and would frequently appear in public with the princes and his sister, in order to encourage the belief that peace and harmony were once more established in the Royal Family. On All Saints' Day, the three princes communicated publicly at the same Mass, and, before receiving the consecrated wafers, Alençon and Navarre renewed the oath which they had taken on their liberation, "protesting to the King their fidelity, and swearing, by the place

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

to which they aspired in Paradise, and by the God whom they were about to receive, to be faithful to him and to his State (as they had ever been), to the last drop of their blood."[1] But even the most solemn oaths counted for very little in those days.

The festivities which marked the sojourn of the Court at Lyons were interrupted by two sad events. The first was the death of Marguerite de Valois, Duchess of Savoy, the Queen of Navarre's aunt and godmother; the second, the untimely end of Marie de Clèves, the young Princesse de Condé, who died in childbed in Paris. Henri III. exhibited the most extravagant grief at the death of his mistress, to whom he had written letters from Poland in his own blood.[2] On learning the news, he fell to the ground in a swoon, and was carried to his apartments, which he caused to be draped in black velvet, and where he remained shut up for several days, for the first two of which he refused to touch either food or wine. When he, at length, reappeared, he was clad in the deepest mourning, and the points of his doublet and even the ribbons of his shoes were garnished with little death's-heads.

Shortly afterwards, the Court quitted Lyons for Avignon, under the pretext of affording the grief-stricken King some distraction, but, in reality, with the object of opening negotiations with d'Amville,[3] Montbrun, and

[1] L'Estoile.

[2] To such lengths did he carry his passion for this lady that during the siege of La Rochelle, in the winter of 1572–1573, he is said to have contemplated treating the poor Prince de Condé as David treated Uriah the Hittite, in order that he might espouse his Bathsheba.

[3] D'Amville, whom, on the death of Charles IX., Catherine had persuaded to return momentarily to her allegiance, had been again alienated by the despicable conduct of the new King. During Henri's visit to

the leaders of the Huguenots of Dauphiné. The King, the Queen-Mother, and most of the Court made the journey, in barges, along the Rhône. This proved a most unfortunate decision, for one barge, containing a large part of the baggage of the Royal Family and a great quantity of valuable plate and specie, was so absurdly overloaded that it capsized and sank, and Alphonse de Gondi, the Queen of Navarre's *maitre d'hôtel*, and more than twenty persons were drowned.

The sojourn of the Court at Avignon was as gloomy as that at Lyons had been pleasant. The sudden death of the Princesse de Condé had occasioned a remarkable change in the humour of Henri III., and whereas, since his arrival in France, he had been the life and soul of every fête and pleasure-party, he now plunged into the most extravagant devotion. He was particularly struck by the proceedings of the Flagellants, a sect very strong in Avignon, who, dressed in sackcloth, nightly paraded the streets of the papal city, by torchlight, chanting the *Miséréré*, and scourging on eanother with whips. Nothing would content him but to become a Flagellant, too, and he accordingly enrolled himself in the confraternity of the "*Blancs-Battus*." The Royal Family and the Court were compelled to follow suit; Catherine joined the black penitents; the Cardinals de Lorraine and d'Armagnac, the blue; while *Monsieur*, Marguerite,

Turin, the Duke of Savoy had urged him to conciliate the "*Politiques*" and to re-establish peace by moderate concessions to the Huguenots, and had invited d'Amville to come and confer with his sovereign. The marshal came, and Henri tried to persuade his host to allow him to be arrested. D'Amville, however, was warned to be on his guard, and hastily returned to Languedoc, where he at once formed a closer alliance with the Huguenots. In 1577 he finally threw in his lot with the Royalist cause.

and even Henri of Navarre, who lent himself with marvellous suppleness to all the exigencies of his difficult rôle, might have been seen in these lugubrious processions. The appearance of the mocking little Béarnais in hood and sackcloth proved, however, too much for Henri III.'s sense of humour, and he could not restrain his laughter.

These ridiculous proceedings had one important result. The Cardinal de Lorraine, unaccustomed to such mortification of the flesh, was attacked by a fever, which in a few days proved fatal, to the open joy of the Protestants, and the secret relief of the King and Catherine, who considered themselves well rid of a very embarrassing personality. On the day of his death, Avignon was visited by a violent storm, which caused the Huguenots to declare that the cardinal had been carried off by the devil, "since something more violent than the wind tore down and whirled off into the air the lattices and window-bars of the house where he lodged."

On January 4, 1575, the Court left Avignon and took the road to Rheims, where, since the time of Clovis, the Kings of France had been crowned. Rheims was reached on February 11, 1575, and, two days later, the coronation took place, in the ancient castle of Saint-Remi. The superstitious—and who was not superstitious in the sixteenth century?—observed that more than one evil omen marked the ceremony. When the crown was placed on Henri's head, by the Archbishop of Rheims, the monarch was heard to exclaim that it hurt him, and twice the diadem tottered and slipped from his brow. It was also remarked that the Master of the Ceremonies forgot the kiss of peace, and that the choristers omitted to chant the *Te Deum*.

Three days after his coronation, Henri, who appears

to have made a singularly rapid recovery from the grief which the death of poor Marie de Clèves had occasioned him, married the sweet and charming Louise de Lorraine, daughter of Nicolas, Comte de Vaudémont, and Marguerite d'Egmont, whom he had seen at Nancy, when he was on his way to Poland. The King's choice created some surprise, for not only was the rank of his bride very far below his own, but her elevation considerably increased the credit of her relatives, the Guises. However, in the eyes of the Queen-Mother, who had warmly favoured the match, these disadvantages were more than counterbalanced by the fact that the new Queen, like Charles IX.'s consort, Elizabeth of Austria, was a simple-minded girl, entirely without ambition, and not in the least likely to dispute the empire which Catherine exercised over her son's mind.

Although Mlle. de Vaudémont—or rather, her parents—had accepted with becoming gratitude the King of France's gracious offer, her affections were engaged elsewhere, François de Luxembourg being the man of her choice. The prince in question had attended the coronation and the marriage, a step which he speedily had cause to regret; for, a day or two after the latter ceremony, Henri III. drew him aside and said: "Cousin, I have married your mistress; but I desire that, in exchange, you should marry mine." And he commanded him to espouse Renée de Châteauneuf, a bright and shining light of the Queen-Mother's "*escadron volant*," whose favours his Majesty had formerly enjoyed. Luxembourg, making, very naturally, a distinction beween the two senses attached to the word "mistress," thanked the King for his thoughtfulness, but begged to be excused. His Majesty, however, would take no refusal,

and insisted that the marriage should take place that very day. The unfortunate prince then "begged very humbly that the King would grant him a week's respite." To which Henri replied that he would give him three days only, at the expiration of which, if he were not prepared to marry the damsel, something exceedingly unpleasant would probably befall him. Long before the three days had passed, however, Luxembourg had placed many a league between himself and the King's wrath.[1]

The Queen of Navarre assisted at the coronation and marriage, and accompanied the Court to Paris, into which the new King and his bride made their entry on February 17, 1575. The rejoicings which followed were interrupted by the news of the death of Claude de Valois, Duchess of Lorraine, who fell a victim, as so many unfortunate women did in those days, to the clumsiness and ignorance of the surgeons who attended her in her confinement. Marguerite sincerely mourned the loss of her sister, between whom and herself there had always existed a strong affection, which family dissensions had been powerless to destroy. Of the ten children whom Catherine de' Medici had borne Henri II., three only now remained: the King, Marguerite, and the Duc d'Alençon.

[1] Before his departure for Poland, Henri had tried to marry Mlle. de Châteauneuf to Nantôuillet, the Provost of Paris. The provost, however, declined the honour, and persisted in his refusal, notwithstanding a sound horsewhipping which the rejected beauty administered to him in public. This lady finally succeeded in finding a husband in the person of a Florentine named Antinoti, who was intendant of the galleys at Marseilles, "and having detected him in a compromising situation with another demoiselle, stabbed him bravely and manfully with her own hand." L'Estoile, who relates this episode, entitles it: "*Acte généreux pour une dame de son métier.*"

Her third son, Louis, and the twins, Victoire and Jeanne, had died in infancy; François II. in his eighteenth year; Elizabeth, the young Queen of Spain, and Charles IX., in their twenty-fourth, and the Duchess of Lorraine in her twenty-eighth. And of the survivors, Marguerite alone was destined to reach the prime of life.

CHAPTER XI

Character of Henri III.—His follies and extravagances—His "*mignons*"—Enmity between the Queen of Navarre and Du Guast—Madame de Sauve—Instigated by Du Guast, she works to sow dissension between *Monsieur* and Henry of Navarre, and between the latter and his wife—Bussy d'Amboise—Marguerite accused by Du Guast and Henri III. of carrying on a *liaison* with him—Question of their relations considered—Du Guast, with the sanction of the King, lays an ambuscade for Bussy, who, however, escapes unhurt—The Queen-Mother persuades Alençon to advise Bussy to withdraw from Court—Violent quarrel between the King and Queen of Navarre.

"*Major privato visus, dum privatus fuit, et omnium consensu capax imperii, nisi imperasset,*" so wrote Tacitus of the Emperor Galba, and his words might be applied with equal force to the last of the Valois kings. Henri III. had gifts which, as we have said elsewhere, might, in a different age and with a different training, have made of him a shrewd and capable ruler. He could become, when it suited his purpose, almost as fine an "actor of royalty" as was Louis XIV.; he could speak with weight and dignity, and even with eloquence; he had insight into men and things, and some of his instructions to his Ambassadors at foreign Courts are models of perspicacity and sound reasoning; while, on more than one occasion, as, for example, when he rebuked the arrogant pretensions of Philip II., he showed a really high sense of his

kingly dignity.[1] But the baneful influence of his mother, and the evil atmosphere amidst which he had been brought up, had corrupted his whole nature and left him almost entirely destitute of a moral sense; and his reign is one miserable record of lost opportunities, of abilities neglected or misapplied, of puerile follies, of shameful profligacy, and of devotional excesses scarcely more serious or more decent than his debaucheries, of duplicity, trickery, and senseless extravagance.

The conduct of the King astonished and irritated his subjects; soon he was not only disliked but despised. What could be thought of a sovereign—to mention only his follies—who, when his country was torn by internal dissensions and hastening towards bankruptcy, could keep his Council waiting for hours while he dressed his wife's hair or starched her ruffs; who appeared at a Court ball, his face rouged and powdered, the body of his doublet cut low, like a woman's, with long sleeves falling to the ground, and a string of pearls round his neck, "so that one did not know," says d'Aubigné, "whether it was a woman-king or a man-queen"; who gave audience to Ambassadors with a basketful of puppies suspended from

[1] In 1582, after Philip II. had usurped the throne of Portugal, he insolently demanded that the Prior of Crato, his defeated rival for the Crown, who had taken refuge in France, should be delivered up or at least expelled from Henri's dominions. To which the French King boldly replied that "he was not less a king than Philip II., and in no way dependent upon him; that France was the asylum of the unfortunate, and that the Prior of Crato should remain there so long as he pleased." Not long afterwards, during a terrible storm, one of the Spanish galleys was wrecked off the coast of France, and a number of the slaves, who had escaped to the shore, implored the King's protection. Philip imperiously demanded their extradition, but was met with the reply that "the soil of France liberated all those who touched it."

his neck by a broad silk ribbon; who might be seen playing Cup and Ball with his courtiers in the streets, and who wasted immense sums, borrowed at usurious interest from Italian bankers or wrung from his unhappy people, on balls, fêtes, and masquerades,[1] or in purchasing jewellery and curios at extravagant prices?

But it was the King's favourites—his odious "*mignons*"—who especially exasperated the people, and ended by changing their dislike and contempt into hatred and disgust. The original idea of these *mignons* was to counterbalance the power of the great nobles, whom Henri feared and distrusted, by men who should owe their fortune entirely to his favour, and, as such, had something to recommend it. But, though a few of his later favourites, such as d'Épernon and Joyeuse, were men of considerable ability, and rendered the King good service, the majority of the earlier ones, chosen only for their good looks, their elegance, and their personal courage, were men of evil lives, who disgusted all classes by their insolence, violence, and debauchery. "From 1576 their name of '*mignons*,' says L'Estoile, "began to be heard in the mouths of the people, to whom they were very odious, both on account of their way of behaving and their effeminate and immodest dress; but, above all, because of the immense

[1] At the Carnival of 1577, Henri had given orders for festivities that would have entailed the expenditure of some 200,000 livres, the equivalent of nearly two million francs in money of to-day; but the death of his father-in-law, Nicolas, Comte de Vaudémont, threw the Court into mourning and caused the fêtes to be abandoned. In the spring of the following year, his Majesty gave a banquet to his brother and the nobles and gentlemen who had accompanied him to the siege of La Charité. At this banquet, the guests were waited on by ladies, dressed, like men, in costumes of green silk, which are said to have cost upwards of 60,000 livres.

gifts and favours which the King lavished upon them, which the people held to be the cause of their ruin. . . . These fine *mignons* wore their hair long, curled, and frizzled, under little velvet caps, as is the custom of the courtesans; and their ruffs starched and half a foot wide, so that when one beheld the head above the ruff, it resembled the head of St. John the Baptist on a charger. . . . Their practices were gambling, blasphemy, dancing, quarrelling, and wenching, and following the King wherever he went." [1]

The most obnoxious of all Henri III.'s early favourites was Du Guast, the gentleman who had been the author of Marguerite de Valois's quarrel with her brother, and of the rupture of her love-affair with the Duc de Guise, since which he had not ceased working to embitter his master's mind against her. Du Guast had accompanied Henri to Poland,[2] and since the latter had become King of France, the favourite's influence over him seemed greater than ever. Naturally insolent and haughty, his good fortune seemed to have turned his head, and rendered him insupportable to all save his royal patron. "He dared to place himself on an equality with the greatest personages," writes de Thou, "even going the length of treating them sometimes as if they had been beneath him, and did not spare the first ladies of the Court, whose reputations he publicly assailed, often in the presence of his Majesty; and he even had the impudence to turn his slanders in the direction of an illustrious princess [Marguerite]."

[1] The name of the *mignons* survived them; the mistresses of Henri IV. were known as the King's "*mignonnes*."

[2] Marguerite says that he remained in France in order to keep her brother's party together, but from the testimony of Brantôme and other chroniclers, it is evident that her memory is here at fault.

Du Guast, indeed, pursued the Queen of Navarre with a persistent malignity for which it is difficult to account, unless on the supposition that he had been an unsuccessful admirer. In justice to him, however, it should be mentioned that Marguerite had fully reciprocated his hatred, had treated him in public with the utmost contempt, and had scornfully rejected all attempts on his part to conciliate her. Brantôme relates that, shortly before the death of Charles IX., Du Guast, entrusted by the King of Poland with some confidential mission, arrived in France, and presented himself before the princess, to hand her a letter from her brother. Upon which the Queen of Navarre angrily exclaimed: "This letter serves you as your safeguard. Were it not for this, I would teach you to speak differently of a princess such as I am, sister of two kings, your sovereigns."

"I am well aware that you wish me ill," replied Du Guast, "but be kind and generous, for love of my master, and hear me." He then sought to excuse himself and denied the slanders imputed to him, but without being able to convince Marguerite, who dismissed him with a gesture of disdain, exclaiming: "I shall always be your mortal enemy!"

Du Guast accepted this imprudent challenge, and no sooner had Henri III. returned to France, than he commenced hostilities. His object was to put an end to the good understandings which reigned between Marguerite and her husband, and between the latter and Alençon, which the Queen of Navarre used every endeavour to maintain. By this means, he would not only gratify his own malice, but serve the interests of his master, since it was of the highest importance to the King and Catherine to prevent

any concerted action between the chiefs of the Huguenots and of the disaffected Catholics.

He found an invaluable auxiliary ready to his hand in the person of Charlotte de Beaune, Baronne de Sauve,[1] lady-of-honour to the Queen-Mother, and perhaps, the most corrupt woman of the Court. Inferior in beauty to Marguerite, Madame de Sauve was greatly her superior in knowledge of life and the conduct of her numerous gallantries. "She exercised over all her lovers," says Mézeray, "so absolute an empire that she never lost one of them, but, on the contrary, constantly acquired new ones." Though she possessed both beauty and intelligence, she was capable neither of constancy nor attachment; loving through vanity, by calculation, and often by the orders of the Queen-Mother; for she was "one of the most celebrated of those facile beauties whom Catherine employed to seduce the chiefs of faction, to retain them in a voluptuous idleness, or to rob them of their secrets."[2] During the visit of the Court to Lyons, she had become the mistress of Henri of Navarre, though he was very far from being the sole possessor of her charms. His brother-in-law, Alençon, was equally her slave; while Guise, Du Guast, and

[1] She was the wife of Simon de Fizes, Baron de Sauve, Secretary of State under Charles IX. and Henri III. After the death of her first husband, in 1579, she married François de la Trémouille, Marquis de Noirmoutier. She retained her fascination until long past her first youth, and it was with her that the Duc de Guise spent his last night on earth, before falling under the daggers of the "*Quarante-Cinq*." A portrait of Madame de Sauve is preserved in the Cabinet des Estampes, and has been reproduced in this volume. The face is pretty, but sensual and cunning. "*Il y a de la chatte dans sa bouche mignonne*," remarks La Ferrière.

[2] Comte Léo de Saint-Poncy, *Marguerite de Valois*, i. 192.

CHARLOTTE DE BEAUNE, BARONNE DE SAUVE

(Afterwards Marquise de Noirmoutier)

From an Engraving after a Drawing by Cramboisy, in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

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Souvré,[1] another of the King's *mignons*, also participated in her favours.

Instigated by Du Guast, this dangerous siren employed all her wiles to excite Navarre and *Monsieur* to jealousy of one another, and succeeded but too well. The former, in spite of his shrewdness, the latter, notwithstanding Marguerite's warnings, fell into the snare spread for them; soon they were in open and declared rivalry. "To such a pitch of violence," writes Marguerite, "did she work up the passion of my brother and my husband that, forgetful of every other ambition, duty and object in life, the sole idea in their minds seemed to be the pursuit of this woman. Moreover, they thereby arrived at so great and furious a jealousy of one another, that, although she was sought by several others, who were all better beloved by her than they were, these two brothers-in-law paid no attention to this, but only dreaded each other's courtship."

Having contrived to embroil the two princes and thus, for the time being, effectually prevent any concerted action between them in the political arena, Madame de Sauve, "aided by the diabolical cunning of Du Guast," devoted herself to the task of estranging the King of Navarre from his wife. To this end, she persuaded him that, stung by jealousy, Marguerite was favouring Alençon's suit, which so angered the enamoured prince that not only did he withdraw all his confidence from his wife, but "gave up speaking to her altogether."

Far from satisfied with the success which had attended the machinations of himself and his ally, Du Guast had meanwhile been keeping a watchful eye on Marguerite's

[1] Gilles de Souvré, Marquis de Courtenvaux. In his old age, he was *gouverneur* of Louis XIII.

conduct; and his joy was great when he detected her in a *liaison* with Bussy d'Amboise, immortalised by the elder Dumas in one of the most celebrated of his romances, *la Dame de Montsoreau.*

Robert de Clermont, Sieur de Bussy d'Amboise, is one of the most perfect types of those elegant, audacious, swashbuckling favourites in whom the Court of the last Valois was so prolific. His handsome face, his haughty bearing, the elegance of his dress, his caustic wit, his duels, and his amours inspired positive enthusiasm. The women adored him; the men regarded him with mingled fear and admiration. The *Mémoires* of the time are full of his praises. To Brantôme he is "*le nonpair de son temps*," the ideal knight, the model of paladins, the last representative of the chivalry of the Middle Ages. The austere lawyer de Thou, and the rigid Calvinist d'Aubigné, while censuring his morals, do not fail to render justice to his brilliant qualities; though the latter regrets that he should have employed his valour "more in biting the dogs of the hunt than the wolves." And L'Estoile shows him to us animated by "an invincible courage, proud and audacious, as valiant as his sword, and as worthy to command an army as any captain in France." However, he reproaches him with having been "vicious and with having little fear of God," and he would appear to have been quarrelsome, debauched, avaricious, and without any scruples worth mentioning.[1]

Bussy had been originally a favourite of the King, and had accompanied Henri to Poland. But, on the latter's accession to the French throne, he took offence

[1] During the St. Bartholomew, he profited by the general massacre to murder his cousin, Antoine de Clermont, with whom he was engaged in a law-suit.

at some slight which he had received, and attached himself to Alençon, who appointed him his chamberlain and, according to L'Estoile, reposed such unbounded confidence in him that he gave him the key of his coffers, and allowed him to help himself to their contents whenever he pleased.

"When we were in Paris," relates Marguerite, "my brother appointed Bussy to attend him, holding him in the high esteem which his valour merited. He was continually in my brother's company and, in consequence, in mine; my brother and I being almost always together, and he having given orders to his attendants to honour and obey me no less than himself. Du Guast, however, putting a different construction upon it, thought that Fortune offered him a fine opportunity, and having, through Madame de Sauve, insinuated himself into the good graces of the King my husband, he endeavoured by every means in his power to persuade him that Bussy was my lover."

The Béarnais, however, turned a deaf ear to Du Guast, though not, in all probability, as Marguerite would have us believe, because he did not credit the accusation, but because it was a matter of supreme indifference to him whether his wife had one or a dozen gallants. Thereupon, the worthy Du Guast carried his tale to Henri III., "whom," says Marguerite, "he found more easy to persuade, as much on account of the little good-will he bore my brother and myself, our friendship being suspicious and odious in his eyes, as because of his hatred of Bussy, who having formerly been in his service, had quitted it, in order to devote himself to my brother."

The King lost no time in informing the Queen-Mother,

whom he advised to remonstrate with Henri of Navarre on his wife's conduct, and strove to incite to the same indignation which she had displayed at Lyons. But Catherine preferred to work in the shadow, and not to enter into open hostility with any one, and had no mind to risk a second mistake, which could not fail to exasperate her daughter. She, therefore, declined to interfere, and, if we are to believe Marguerite, said to the King: "I know not who the mischief-makers are who put such ideas into your head. My daughter is unfortunate to have been born in such times. In our day, we spoke freely to every one, and your uncles, M. le Dauphin [1] and M. d'Orléans, were constantly in the bed-chamber of your aunt, Madame Marguerite,[2] and myself; and no one thought it strange, nor indeed was there any reason why they should. Bussy sees my daughter before you, before her husband, and before her husband's people, in her chamber, and before every one; not in secret or with closed doors. Bussy is a person of quality and your brother's first gentleman-in-waiting! What is there to complain of in this? Do you know anything further concerning it? By a calumny, at Lyons, you made me offer her (Marguerite) a very great affront, which I very much fear that she will resent all her life."

The King, continues Marguerite, was much disconcerted. "Madame," said he, "I only speak of this after others." "Who are those others, my son?" replied the Queen-Mother. "They are people who wish to set you at variance with all your relatives."

"The King, having taken his departure," continues the princess, "she repeated everything to me, and said:

[1] Elder brother of Henri II., who died August 10, 1533.

[2] Marguerite de Valois, Duchess of Savoy, sister of François I.

'You were born in an evil day'; and calling Madame de Dampierre, she fell to conversing with her about the pleasant liberty of action which they enjoyed in their time, without being, like us, subjected to slander."

True to the rôle which she assumes throughout her *Mémoires*, that of a cruelly maligned woman, Marguerite has endeavoured to remove from the minds of her readers any suspicion that Du Guast's accusation might have had a basis of truth; and it is difficult not to admire the adroitness with which she places her own apology in her mother's mouth. However, she speaks of Bussy in terms too passionate, and takes his part with too much warmth for her protestations of innocence to be very readily accepted. "She is no longer mistress of her pen, and one seems to feel by the extravagance of her praises that her heart overflows."[1] "There was not one of his sex and quality in this century," she writes, "who was his equal in valour, renown, grace, and understanding; so much so that there were some who maintained that, if one were to believe, like certain philosophers, in the transmigration of souls, no doubt could exist that the soul of your gallant brother Hardelay animated him."[2] While, elsewhere, she declares that he was "born to be the terror of his enemies, the glory of his master, and the hope of his friends."

Moreover, the testimony of the Queen of Navarre's contemporaries is against her. Dampmartin, in his *Fortune de la Cour*, relates that, venturing to speak one day to Bussy about his friendship with the princess, his

[1] Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, vol. vi. *La Reine Marguerite, ses mémoires et ses lettres.*

[2] Jean de Bourdeille, brother of Brantôme, to whom Marguerite's *Mémoires* are addressed. Brantôme speaks of him in his *Éloge des hommes illustres françois.*

words "affected him and caused him to blush a little, because he knew that he was something to her." And Brantôme, the common friend of Bussy and Marguerite, and the latter's most devoted admirer, says that she abandoned one of her lovers "to accord her favours to a young nobleman, brave and valliant, who bore on the point of his sword the honour of his lady, without any one daring to touch it."

This allusion, very justly observes M. Charles Merki, is sufficiently clear, and, after it, when one remembers the predilections of the writer, further evidence becomes superfluous.[1] And we, therefore, fear that the efforts of Marguerite's apologist, M. de Saint-Poncy, to prove that the princess was Bussy's mistress only in the poetic sense of the term are so much labour lost.[2]

Foiled in his design to injure Marguerite, and fearing that he might be called upon to answer to her lover for his temerity, Du Guast, with the full approval of the King, now resolved to get rid of Bussy, according to the fashion of those days, not, of course, in fair fight, seeing that he would have stood but a poor chance had he ventured to measure swords with that doughty champion, but by means of an ambuscade. Circumstances favoured him, since Bussy—a host in himself—was for the time being *hors de combat*, suffering from a wound in his sword-arm, which he had received in a duel with Saint-Phal, one of Henri III.'s *mignons*. Du Guast, who was colonel of the King's guards, posted, one night, a number of his men in a street through which his enemy must pass, on his way from the Louvre to his lodging in the Rue de Grenelle; who, when Bussy appeared, accompanied

[1] *La Reine Margot et la fin des Valois*, p. 124.

[2] *Marguerite de Valois*, i. 300–302.

by only some fifteen or twenty followers, discharged a volley of arquebus and pistol-shots, "sufficient to scatter a whole regiment," and then hurled themselves upon him. A desperate hand-to-hand fight ensued, in which one unfortunate gentleman, who, owing to the fact that he, like Bussy, carried his arm in a sling, was mistaken for him in the darkness, fell covered with wounds. Bussy himself escaped unhurt, by stepping through a door, which, by good fortune, had been left ajar, and closing it in the face of his adversaries.

However, the news of the affray was carried to the Louvre, by an Italian gentleman in Alençon's service, who rushed, all covered with blood, into the palace, crying out that Bussy was being assassinated. Alençon, who had retired for the night, immediately sprang out of bed, threw on his clothes, and, sword in hand, was about to run to his favourite's assistance, when he was stopped by Marguerite and the Queen-Mother, who besought him not to expose himself to danger, pointing out that the affair had very probably been concerted by his enemies, for the express purpose of drawing him from the Louvre and assassinating him under cover of the darkness. Their prayers and remonstrances ultimately prevailed, and *Monsieur* returned to his apartments, though, fearing lest he might change his mind, Catherine sent orders to the porters on no account to open the palace gates. An hour or two later, Marguerite and her brother learned, to their intense relief, that Bussy was safe, and, the following morning, their hero presented himself at the Louvre, "with as gallant and gay a demeanour," writes the princess, "as if the attack upon him had been merely a passage of arms for his amusement."

Alençon, however, was none the less determined to

take vengeance for the affront which, he considered, had been offered him, "in seeking to deprive him of as valliant and worthy a servant as ever prince of his quality had known." The King was equally determined to protect the offenders, and, urged on by Du Guast, declared that Bussy had brought all the trouble upon himself by his overbearing and quarrelsome behaviour, and swore that he would no longer tolerate such a ruffianly brawler at his Court. In the end, Catherine, fearing an open rupture between her sons, persuaded Alençon to advise his favourite to withdraw for a while from Paris and the Court. The duke reluctantly consented and, one fine morning, Bussy was escorted by a troupe of his friends and admirers to the Porte Saint-Antoine, and retired to his government of Anjou, where he remained until after the "Peace of *Monsieur*."

Marguerite was naturally much incensed by Bussy's banishment, and her chagrin was accentuated by fresh difficulties with her husband, who took offence at her indiscreet championship of the exiled gallant. However, they were momentarily reconciled, when the Queen came to his assistance one night, "when he was seized with a very serious indisposition, the result, I believe, of his amorous excesses (*Qui lui venoit, comme je crois, d'excez qu'il avoit faits avec les femmes*)."[1] This pleased him so much, she tells us, that he praised her to every one, declaring that, but for her timely succour, he would certainly have died.

Taking advantage of this change in his disposition towards her, Marguerite succeeded in bringing about a better understanding between Henri and Alençon, who were beginning to suspect that the fascinating Madame

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

de Sauve had been deceiving them both. The *rapprochement* between the two princes alarmed Du Guast, who, "recognising that she (Marguerite) was the cause of it, and that she acted as a kind of unguent, such as exists in all natural objects, and which joins and cements their severed parts," advised Henri III. to induce the King of Navarre to dismiss Mlle. de Thorigny,[1] his consort's favourite maid-of-honour, on the ground that she had assisted her mistress in her intrigue with Bussy. As Du Guast had, of course, foreseen, a violent quarrel between the young couple followed; and Marguerite's exasperation against her husband reached such a pitch that she refused to live with him any longer as his wife, or even to speak to him.

[1] Gillone Govion de Matignon, daughter of Jacques de Matignon, Comte de Thorigny, *Maréchal de France*. She married, *en premières noces*, Pierre d'Harcourt, seigneur de Beuvron, and, after his death, the Comte de Nermont.

CHAPTER XII

Irksome position of Henri of Navarre and Alençon at Court —Flight of *Monsieur*—Fury of the King on learning of his brother's escape—The Queen-Mother leaves Paris to negotiate with Alençon—Serious position of affairs—Henri III. vents his anger upon Marguerite and causes her to be placed under arrest in her own apartments—Attempt of Du Guast against the life of Mlle. de Thorigny—Assassination of Du Guast by the Baron de Viteaux—Question of Marguerite's responsibility for this crime considered—Escape of the King of Navarre—Marguerite again subjected to a rigorous confinement—Henri III. compelled to treat with the rebels—Alençon refuses to negotiate until his sister is set at liberty—The Queen of Navarre, at the request of the King and Catherine, accompanies the latter to confer with the leaders of the insurrection—The Peace of Beaulieu ("Peace of Monsieur") —Marguerite returns to Paris.

In the meanwhile, the position of Henri of Navarre and Alençon at Court had become even more irksome than it had been during the preceding reign. Although nominally at liberty, they were still subjected to the closest and most vexatious surveillance. Navarre saw his hereditary States a prey to disorder, his authority declining, and his orders ignored by his subjects, who considered themselves absolved from obedience to a ruler who was little better than a prisoner; from his kingdom he received scarcely anything. His other fiefs of the Armagnac, Périgord, Rouergue, Foix, and the Limousin were ravaged by war and brought him but a

meagre revenue. As for his salary as Governor of Guienne, his pensions and those of his wife, these had been for some time past in arrears; and Du Guast took care that his requests for payment should be met by specious excuses or mortifying refusals.

Alençon was in no better case. The revenues of his appanage were insufficient to enable him to maintain the dignity of his position, and he was deeply in debt. His brother treated him with coldness and contempt; while his friends found themselves threatened with disgrace, and were continually having quarrels thrust upon them by the insolent favourites of the King.

Under stress of their common grievances, the two princes agreed to forget their differences, and resumed their projects of escape. This time success rewarded their efforts. On September 15, 1575, Alençon, muffled in his cloak,[1] left the Louvre, about six o'clock in the evening, followed by a single gentleman, and made his way to the Porte Saint-Honoré. Here Simier, his Master of the Wardrobe, was awaiting him with a coach. *Monsieur* entered it, and was driven to Meudon, where Guitry, the Huguenot leader whose attempt to effect his liberation eighteen months before had miscarried, joined him with a body of cavalry. The fugitive prince left his coach, mounted a horse, and rode to Dreux, one of the towns of his appanage, which had been selected as the rendezvous of his partisans.[2]

Great was the consternation at the Louvre when it

[1] D'Aubigné relates that, before setting out, he had put on the doublet which La Môle had worn on the day of his execution, swearing to wear it in the day of battle, and not to lay it aside until he had avenged his ill-fated favourite.

[2] De Thou gives a different account of Alençon's escape, but that of Marguerite, which we have followed, is to be preferred. The princess

became known that *Monsieur* had fled from Paris. "His absence," writes Marguerite, "was not remarked until nine o'clock in the evening, when the King and the Queen my mother inquired of me, why he had not supped with them, and whether he were ill. I told them that I had not seen him since dinner-time. They sent to his chamber to ascertain what he was doing, but were informed that he was not there. They gave orders that search should be made for him in all the ladies' apartments which he was in the habit of frequenting. He was sought for all over the palace and all over the town, but was not to be found. The alarm increased; the King flew into a passion, stormed, threatened, sent to summon all the princes and nobles of the Court, and ordered them to take horse and bring him back, alive or dead, declaring that he had gone to disturb his realm and to make war upon him, and that he would teach him the folly he was committing in attacking a King as powerful as himself. . . . Some accepted this commission,[1] and prepared to mount their horses. They were unable, however, to be in readiness to start before daybreak, for which reason they failed to overtake my brother, and were obliged to return, not being equipped for war."

From Dreux, Alençon issued a proclamation, "based," remarks L'Estoile, "as they all are, on the preservation and re-establishment of the laws and statutes of the realm," which greatly perturbed the King and the Court. The Queen-Mother offered to endeavour to bring back the fugitive, and, on September 21, she left

was in her brother's confidence and, therefore, better informed. Moreover, her version of the affair is confirmed by L'Estoile.

[1] But others, like the Duc de Montpensier, curtly refused.

Paris, accompanied by the Cardinal de Bourbon and the Bishop of Mende. But *Monsieur*, warned that Nevers and Matignon were assembling troops to take the field against him, did not await her arrival, but withdrew into Touraine ; and it was not until October 5 that Catherine contrived to overtake him at Chambourg. The prince, however, refused to negotiate, until the two marshals, Montmorency and Cossé, who were still in the Bastille, had been released ; and Henri III. was compelled to set them at liberty and beg them to use their influence in favour of peace. Both the King and Catherine were thoroughly alarmed at the turn which events were taking ; for the escape of Alençon had been the signal for the "*Politiques*" and Huguenots to commence a vigorously offensive warfare. Thoré, the youngest of the Montmorency brothers, had advanced into Champagne, at the head of 5000 Germans, who were only the advance-guard of a large force of the dreaded *Reiters*, which Condé had been for some time past employed in raising ; d'Amville, in Languedoc, was preparing to support Alençon with 14,000 men ; while John Casimir, brother of the Elector Palatine, was threatening the Three Bishoprics. The defeat of Thoré, by Guise, at Dormans, on October 11, in which engagement the duke received the wound in the face which earned him, like his celebrated father, the name of "*le Balafré*," checked the advance of the Germans. But the Huguenots captured Issoire, and the King was glad to purchase a truce of six months, at Champigny, by surrendering to his brother the towns of Angoulême, Niort, Saumur, Bourges, and La Charité, as pledges of his good faith (November 21, 1575).

At the Court, meanwhile, poor Marguerite, overcome

by anxiety on her brother's account and by fear lest the King should vent his resentment upon her, had fallen into a violent fever, which confined her to her bed for some days. Her apprehensions, as regarded herself, were fully justified, for when she reappeared, Henri III., who, notwithstanding her protestations of innocence, entertained no doubt that she had been an accomplice of Alençon's flight, overwhelmed her with threats and reproaches. "He was so inflamed against me," she writes, "that, had he not been restrained by the Queen my mother, I believe that his rage would have led him to perpetrate some cruelty against me, to the endangering of my life." The cautious Catherine pointed out to her infuriated son that ere long they might be glad to avail themselves of the princess's good offices, "for that, as prudence enjoined that we ought to live with our friends as though they might one day become our enemies, so also did she ordain that when the ties of affection were severed, we should behave to our enemies as though they might one day become our friends."

This judicious counsel prevented the King from taking any violent measures against his sister; but he ordered her to be placed under arrest in her own apartments,[1] and strictly prohibited every one from visiting or holding any communication with her; guards being posted before her door to see that his orders were carried out. No one

[1] In her *Mémoires*, Marguerite places her imprisonment after the escape of Henri of Navarre, which took place five months subsequent to that of Alençon, in February 1576. But, since she states, in another passage, that it preceded the departure of the Queen-Mother for the interview of Champigny and the death of Du Guast, of which we shall presently speak, it is obvious, as her biographer M. de Saint-Poncy points out, that either her memory is at fault, or she has knowingly erred, through a desire to pose as the victim of conjugal devotion.

ventured to disobey, with the exception of the gallant Crillon,[1] who braved all prohibitions and loss of favour, and came several times to visit the captive princess, "astonishing so much thereby the Cerberi who guarded her door, that they did not venture either to address him or to deny him entrance."

Not content with subjecting his sister to a rigorous confinement, Henri, at the suggestion of the amiable Du Guast, determined to take vengeance upon her in other fashion.

We have spoken, in the preceding chapter, of a Mlle. de Thorigny, maid-of-honour to Marguerite, whom the King had persuaded Henri of Navarre to dismiss from his wife's service, on the ground that she had been an intermediary between the young Queen and Bussy. This Mlle. de Thorigny, after leaving the Court, had retired to the country-house of one of her relatives, a certain Sieur de Chastelas. But, one fine morning, soon after the flight of Alençon, a party of soldiers belonging to Du Guast's regiment rode up to the château, and informed the trembling damsel that they had orders from his Majesty to convey her back to Paris. They then seized and bound her, and locked her up in her room, the while they devoted themselves to the congenial task of pillaging the house and making merry with the contents of the Sieur de Chastelas's cellar.

If we are to believe Marguerite, the soldiers had secret instructions to drown the unfortunate young lady in an adjoining stream; but, however that may be, it is tolerably certain that some very unpleasant fate awaited

[1] Louis de Berton des Balbes de Crillon, Knight of Malta, afterwards one of the most celebrated captains of Henri IV. He was an intimate friend of Bussy d'Amboise, whose life he had saved in Poland.

her. Happily for Mlle. de Thorigny, just as her captors were on the point of carrying her off, a body of horse, on their way to join Alençon's army, appeared upon the scene, under the command of Avantigny, one of *Monsieur's* chamberlains, promptly charged and scattered Du Guast's troopers, and rescued the lady.[1]

The attempt upon Mlle. de Thorigny was the last of Du Guast's exploits, as, shortly afterwards, his career came to an abrupt and tragic termination.

The *mignon* had many enemies, but the most implacable of all was a certain Guillaume du Prat, Baron de Viteaux, younger brother of Nantouillet, Provost of Paris, who had declined the hand of Mlle. de Châteauneuf, Henri III.'s discarded mistress. This Viteaux, who was a notorious brawler, had killed, in a duel, a gentleman named Allègre, one of the King's favourites. The King would probably have overlooked the offence ; but Du Guast, an intimate friend of the ill-fated Allègre, gave him no peace until he had disgraced and exiled Viteaux, who left Paris vowing vengeance against the author of his punishment. Nor were his threats idle ones. Towards the end of October 1575, he returned secretly to Paris, accompanied by some trusty retainers, concealed himself in the Couvent des Augustins, and sent his servants to gather information concerning the movements of his enemy.

Du Guast, as a rule, was far from an easy person to approach with any hostile intent, since, aware of the hatred of which he was the object, it was his practice to go about guarded by some fifteen or twenty of the men of his regiment, who never left him during the day, and at night posted themselves around his lodging. However, he happened, just at that time, to be carrying on an

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

intrigue with a Madame d'Estrées, who resided in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and, in order to facilitate their intercourse, had rented a small house adjoining that of his mistress and communicating with it. Moreover, since the lady set rather more store by her reputation than was customary in those days, and the sight of Du Guast's tall guardsmen on duty outside the house could not fail to arouse gossip in the neighbourhood, he confined his following on the nights when he visited the Faubourg Saint-Germain to two or three confidential servants.

Viteaux, duly informed of all this, laid his plans with secrecy and promptitude. On All Saints' Eve (November 1, 1575), Du Guast, according to his habit, was reading in bed—like so many men of pleasure in the sixteenth century, the favourite made some pretence of culture—when the door was flung open, and Viteaux, followed by two *bravos*, brothers of the name of Boucicaux, who, on account of their courage and ferocity, he called " his lions," rushed into the room. By some means, they had succeeded in gaining admission to the house, and had poniarded the servants before they had had time to give the alarm.

Snatching up a sword, which stood beside his pillow, Du Guast attempted to defend himself ; but the combat was an unequal one, and in a few moments he was despatched. Throwing a coverlet over the corpse, Viteaux passed into the adjoining house, where he found Madame d'Estrées, who had not yet retired to rest, and, with revolting cruelty, wiped his sword, wet with the blood of her lover, upon the distracted woman's dress. Then, since it was midnight, and the gates were closed, he and his accomplices made for the city walls, down which they

lowered themselves, by means of a rope, mounted horses which were awaiting them, and escaped to the army of Alençon.

We have dwelt upon this tragic affair at greater length than it perhaps deserves, since it has been made the occasion of a very serious charge against Marguerite de Valois. Not only the scurrilous pamphleteers of the time, but grave historians, like de Thou and Mézeray, and, after them, a crowd of other writers, do not hesitate to assert or to hint that Viteaux did not act on his own initiative, but was the instrument of a more important quarrel. With a wealth of detail, which does infinite credit to their imaginative faculties, picturesque historians relate how the young Queen of Navarre, having endured the persecutions of Du Guast until her patience was exhausted, resolved upon a sure method of putting an end to them for ever; how, having been informed that the injured Viteaux was in hiding in Paris, she visited him in his cloistral retreat, under cover of night, and, by a pathetic relation of the wrongs she had suffered at the hands of their common enemy, roused him to the last pitch of fury. And that inimitable embroiderer of historical fact, Michelet, adds that, the better to assure her vengeance, she appealed to other passions, and surrendered herself to the embraces of the *bravo*.

Now, what truth, if any, is there in all this? None whatever! De Thou, the most reliable witness, does not actually name Marguerite; he merely says that a woman of the highest rank went to seek Viteaux in his hiding-place. It is by no means certain, as so many later writers assume, that he intended to indicate the young Queen; for Du Guast's malignant tongue had injured more than one lady of the highest rank. In

L'Estoile's account of the affair, there is not a word about Marguerite; while Brantôme refuses to admit that she had any connection with the crime. "Although he [Du Guast] had greatly injured her," he writes, "she did not render him the like, nor avenge herself. It is true that, when he was killed, and they came to announce it to her, she merely said: 'I am very vexed that I am not quite cured, in order to have the joy of celebrating his death.' But, moreover, she was so good, that when any one humbled himself before her, in order to seek her pardon and favour, she forgave and pardoned everything, after the fashion of the generosity of the lion, who never harms one who humbles himself."

However, as M. de Saint-Poncy points out, Marguerite has really no need of the testimony of any chronicler in her favour, since she would have been able to prove, had she been required, the most incontestable of *alibis*. When the murder was planned and executed, she was in a position which made it impossible for her to visit the Augustine convent or any other place, since she was at that time a close prisoner in her apartments in the Louvre, with guards stationed at her door to prevent her leaving them or even receiving visitors. It was, indeed, just at the moment of Du Guast's death that her captivity was the most rigorous, nor was it relaxed until after the truce signed at Champigny on November 21, 1575, three weeks later. Further, from the words which Brantôme attributes to her, it is clear that she must have been ill and confined to her room, and probably to her bed, by a rather slow convalescence. "I am very vexed that I am not quite cured," she says, "in order to have the joy of celebrating his death"; a very reprehensible speech no doubt, but also very natural,

in the mouth of a young woman, who suddenly learns that she has no longer to fear the most cruel of her enemies.[1]

Marguerite is then innocent of the crime imputed to her, though it is not at all improbable that her brother and ally Alençon, who had a long score of his own against M. du Guast, had been the instigator of the deed. L'Estoile tells us that it was the general belief in Paris that the murder had been committed "with his full consent and by his orders, inasmuch as this proud and audacious *mignon* had braved *Monsieur*, even to the length of one day passing him in the Rue Saint-Antoine without saluting him, or even pretending to know him, and had several times declared that he recognised only the King, and that, when the latter should order him to kill his own brother, he would do it." And Mongez writes: "That which completes this conviction, is the refusal addressed to *Monsieur* by M. de Ruffec, Governor of Angoulême. This town had been given to the duke for a surety, and when he pressed Ruffec to surrender it, the latter excused himself, on the plea that, since he had always been devoted to the service of the King, and, in consequence, the enemy of *Monsieur*, he feared the fate of Du Guast, whom his Majesty's favour had not been able to protect against his (Alençon's) blows."[2]

[1] Comte Léo de Saint-Poncy, *Marguerite de Valois*, i. 345. In her *Mémoires*, Marguerite makes no attempt to conceal her detestation of "this instrument of hatred and dissension," who, she says, was "killed by a judgment of God, as he was following a cure, his body being ruined by all kinds of abominations and given over to the corruption which had long possessed it, when his soul became the prey of the demons to whom he had done homage by magic and all manner of wickedness."

[2] *Histoire de Marguerite de Valois.*

For the rest, Du Guast was well served; he was one of the worst of the *mignons* of Henri III., and his attacks upon women—for not only did he wage war upon Marguerite, but even ventured to traduce and persecute the innocent and inoffensive Queen Louise—shocked and disgusted all who retained a vestige of chivalrous feeling. The manner of his death, too, was singularly appropriate, since he had been one of the most pitiless of the assassins of the St. Bartholomew. "As he had surprised some in their beds," writes L'Estoile—"of which he boasted—so he himself was surprised and slain."

After the death of Du Guast and the truce of Champigny, the Queen of Navarre found her position more tolerable. Alençon had strongly protested against the treatment to which his sister was being subjected, and Catherine had not failed to represent to the King the necessity of conciliating the duke by every means in their power. Though Marguerite, therefore, still remained under arrest, she was allowed a certain amount of liberty. Nevertheless, her life was far from a pleasant one, and soon the affairs of her husband came to aggravate her situation.

Henri of Navarre, who both disliked and despised Alençon, though necessity had driven them into an alliance, chafed to see him occupying a position which he felt should be his, and waited impatiently for a chance of escaping from the thraldom which he had now endured for more than three years. Nevertheless, in order to enable his friends to complete their preparations, he was compelled to postpone his attempt until the end of February 1576. In the meanwhile, he continued his

apparently careless and trivial life, and, by cleverly feigning disapproval of Alençon's conduct, succeeded in quieting Henri III.'s suspicions and securing greater liberty. However, on February 4, as he was returning from a hunting expedition in the Forest of Senlis, he met his faithful equerry, Agrippa d'Aubigné, and two or three other attendants galloping at full speed from Paris.

"Sire," cried d'Aubigné, "we are betrayed; the King knows all. The road to Paris leads to dishonour and death; those to life and glory are in the opposite direction."

"There is no need of so many words," replied Henri, "the die is cast."

The young King was, as was customary, escorted by two gentlemen, who were responsible to Henri III. for his safety. But them he dismissed, on some pretext which they did not care to question, in face of the truculent attitude of d'Aubigné and his companions, and then, turning his horse's head, made for Poissy, where he crossed the Seine and reached the town of Alençon in safety. Here he stood sponsor at the christening, according to Calvinistic ritual, of the child of one of his adherents. As he entered the meeting-house, the congregation were singing the 21st Psalm. "The King shall rejoice in Thy strength, O Lord; exceeding glad shall he be of Thy salvation. Thou hast given him his heart's desire." Hearing that the psalm had not been specially chosen, he said that he welcomed it as a good omen.[1]

It is related that until Henri crossed the Seine,[2] he

[1] Mr. P. F. Willert, "Henry of Navarre and the Huguenots in France," p. 108.

[2] L'Estoile and the many writers who follow him name the *Loire*. But this is an obvious error, since, in journeying from Paris to Alençon, Henri had not to cross the Loire.

maintained an absolute silence; but the moment he had left the river behind him, he gave a deep sigh of relief, and, raising his eyes to Heaven, exclaimed: "Praise be to God, who has delivered me! They killed my mother in Paris, the Admiral, and my best servants, and desired nothing better than to treat me in the same way, had not God preserved me. I will never return there, unless I am dragged by force." Then, reverting to his habitual gaiety of manner, he added: "I have left in Paris only two things which I regret: the Mass and my wife. The first I will make shift to do without; but the latter I cannot, and I shall be glad to see her again."

From Alençon, Henri proceeded to Saumur on the Loire, where the Huguenot gentry of the neighbourhood hastened to join him.

The flight of her husband brought upon the head of the Queen of Navarre a renewal of Henri III.'s resentment, and she found herself once more subjected to a rigorous confinement; indeed, if we are to believe Mongez, his Majesty was so incensed against his sister that, but for Catherine's intervention, he would have chastised her with his own royal hands.[1] But posterity ought to regard Marguerite's captivity as a singular piece of good fortune, since it was during those long, lonely hours that she acquired, or rather regained, those habits of serious study, which had been impossible amid the feverish gaiety of the Court, and the result of which may be traced in almost every page of her *Mémoires.*

Meanwhile, the King and Catherine found themselves confronted by a coalition which grew every day more

[2] *Histoire de Marguerite de Valois.*

threatening. Condé and John Casimir, at the head of a formidable army of *Reiters*, invaded Burgundy, took Dijon, crossed the Loire, near La Charité, and effected a junction with the forces of Alençon on the Bourbonnais. In Gascony, several important places had fallen into the hands of the Huguenots; and while "the bravest and most chivalrous in France" flocked to Alençon's standard, the royal troops were half-hearted and mutinous, and many of the nobles flatly refused to march against *Monsieur*, "dreading," says Marguerite, "to get their fingers pinched between two stones."

Under these circumstances, Henri III. had no choice but to make overtures of peace to his rebellious brother, and to Catherine once more fell the thankless task of conducting the negotiations. Before leaving Paris, she pointed out to the King that it would be advisable to take Marguerite with her; but Henri would not consent to part with so valuable a hostage, and she was compelled to leave her in his hands. However, as she had probably foreseen, Alençon declined to treat until his sister was set at liberty. "The Queen my mother," writes Marguerite, "having received this reply, returned and informed the King of what my brother had said, adding that it was necessary, if he desired peace, that she should go back again, but that, if she went without me, her journey would be again useless. She said, further, that, if she took me with her, without having first conciliated me, I should injure rather than serve her cause, and that it was even to be feared that she might experience some difficulty in persuading me to return, and that I might wish to rejoin the King my husband."

Henri III., compelled to admit the force of his mother's reasoning, consented to what she proposed. Catherine

at once sent for Marguerite, and requested her assistance to induce *Monsieur* to come to terms with the Court, begging her "not to allow the affront which she had received to inspire her with sentiments of vengeance rather than with a desire for peace, as the King was prepared to make her every reparation in his power." Then Henri himself entered and made his sister all kinds of pretty speeches; and the interview terminated by Marguerite magnanimously declaring that she was prepared to "sacrifice herself," for the welfare of her family and the State.

Accompanied by the Queen of Navarre and her "*escadron volant*," Catherine set out for the Château of Chastenay, near Sens, the rendezvous she and Alençon had agreed upon. "My brother," resumes Marguerite, "came thither, followed by the principal nobles and princes of his army, both Catholic and Huguenot, and the Duke Casimir, and Colonel Poux, who had brought with him six thousand *Reiters*. The conditions of peace were here discussed for several days, a good many disputes arising respecting the articles, chiefly about those which concerned 'the Religion.'" [1]

The terms, which were finally agreed upon at Beaulieu (May 1576), were a complete triumph for the rebels, and clearly prove the desperate straits to which the insurrection had reduced Henri III. The Protestants secured concessions greater than any which they had hitherto obtained. They were granted complete freedom of worship throughout the kingdom, except in Paris; the establishment of courts in all the Parlements composed of an equal number of judges of both religions, and restoration to all their honours and offices; while

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

the Massacre of Saint-Bartholomew was formally disavowed and the property of Coligny and other prominent victims restored to their heirs,[1] and eight fortresses handed over to them, as security for the due observance of the treaty. Alençon received the addition to his appanage of the duchies of Anjou, Berry, Touraine, and Maine, and other lordships, which raised his revenue to 400,000 écus. He now assumed the title of Duc d'Anjou, which had been that of Henri III. before his accession to the throne, and by which we must henceforth refer to him. Henri of Navarre was confirmed in his government of Guienne and Condé in that of Picardy. Finally, a large sum was paid to John Casimir for the wages of his *Reiters*, and to compensate him for the trouble and expense of his invasion of France, besides which he was granted an annual pension of 40,000 livres, in order to secure his friendship.

Monsieur had advised his sister to allow herself to be included in the treaty, and to demand the assignment of her marriage-portion in lands. But Catherine begged her not to insist on this, assuring her that she could obtain from the King whatever she desired; and Marguerite very unwisely yielded, "preferring to owe what she might receive from the King and the Queen her mother to their good-will alone, in the belief that it would be thus more permanently assured to her." Nor did she succeed in obtaining permission to join her husband, who, so soon as peace was concluded, had written, "inviting her to demand her *congé*." Catherine pleaded, with tears in her eyes, that she had pledged her

[1] The execution of Montgommery was also declared to have been a miscarriage of justice, and, on the demand of Alençon, that of La Môle and Coconnas as well.

word to the King to bring her daughter back to Paris, and that, if Marguerite refused to return, his Majesty would imagine that she had induced her to rejoin her husband, and that she (the Queen-Mother) would be ruined. She added that she need only remain at Court until *Monsieur* arrived, when she would immediately obtain permission for her to depart. And so very reluctantly the Queen of Navarre returned to Paris.

CHAPTER XIII

Irritation aroused in the ultra-Catholic party by the Treaty of Beaulieu—Formation of the League—Alarm of Henri III., who, to checkmate the Guises, resolves to place himself at its head—The King of Navarre demands that his wife shall be permitted to return to him—And sends the Vicomte de Duras to conduct her to Béarn—Henri III. promises to send her back, but breaks his word—The States-General meets at Blois—The King signs the roll of the League and compels all the principal persons of the Court to do likewise—The Estates vote in favour of restoring the unity of the faith by force, but refuse to vote the supplies required to carry on an effective war—The King of Navarre sends Génissac to Blois to demand his wife—Henri III., in spite of the reproaches of Marguerite, refuses to allow her to depart—Unpleasant position of the princess at Court—Intrigues of Mondoucet in Flanders—Under the pretext of taking the waters of Spa, it is decided that Marguerite shall proceed to Flanders, to pave the way for Anjou's enterprise.

The Protestants would have been well advised, had they been satisfied with less favourable terms than they had demanded and obtained at the "Peace of *Monsieur*." The concessions granted them aroused, as had been the case after the Treaty of Saint-Germain, the greatest irritation among the more zealous Catholics, who regarded them in the light of a betrayal of their faith. The Parlement of Paris refused to register the edict, and the King had to hold a Bed of Justice to force it to confirm it. The clergy of Notre-Dame declined to allow

the cathedral choir to sing the *Te Deum*, which was eventually chanted by the choristers of Henri III.'s private chapel, in the presence of only those officials of the Court, the municipality, and the Parlement whose duties compelled them to attend. The illuminations at the Hôtel-de-Ville were witnessed by a mere handful of spectators; and the reading of the edict by the Herald-at-Arms in the court of the Louvre was listened to in sullen silence, broken here and there by angry murmurs.

Soon it became apparent that it would be impossible to enforce the conditions of the peace. The Protestants in various parts of the country were attacked, and their worship disturbed by the populace, and, since the persistent hostility of the Parlements prevented the establishment of the mixed tribunals, they were unable to obtain redress. Jacques d'Humières, the Governor of Péronne, a friend of the Guises and a bitter enemy of the Montmorencies, refused to deliver that fortress to Condé, when, as Governor of Picardy, the prince demanded to be placed in possession of it, and formed for his support a confederacy between the partisans of the Guises and the bigoted Catholics of the province. The movement spread with astonishing rapidity, especially among the fanatical population of Paris, and soon grew into a general "Holy League," or association of the extreme Catholic party throughout the kingdom.

The idea of the League was not new. It had been conceived by the Cardinal de Lorraine at the time of the Council of Trent, and the young Duc de Guise had made a tentative attempt to carry out his uncle's scheme, in 1568, in his government of Champagne. But it remained in a state of conception until 1576, when the alarm and

resentment of the bigoted Catholics, at the growth of Protestantism and the impotence of the King to arrest its progress, produced a vast association, which soon came to be regarded by both priests and people as the chief bulwark of the ancient faith.

Henri III., in consenting to the demands of the Huguenots, had probably counted on the reaction which his concessions would provoke, and was not ill-pleased at seeing "the advantages which had been obtained by force and conceded with reluctance," rendered futile. But the formation of the League—whose members were binding themselves to regard as enemies all who refused to join it, to defend each other against any assailant, *whoever he might be*, and to endeavour to compass the objects of the association *against no matter what opposition* —alarmed him greatly, and, after an unsuccessful attempt to obtain a promise from the Guises that they would form no association calculated to lead to a breach of the recent peace, he decided that the only course open to him was to place himself at its head. This decision rendered a new war inevitable.

Henri of Navarre had fared no better in his government of Guienne than had his cousin Condé in Picardy; the gates of Bordeaux were closed against him, and he soon found that his authority throughout the rest of the province was little more than nominal. This effectually removed any illusion which he might have entertained as to the solidity of the recent treaty, and, instead of laying down his arms, he began to make active preparations for war. Nevertheless, it did not prevent him addressing energetic protests to the King in regard to the treatment to which he had been subjected at

Bordeaux ; while, at the same time, he demanded that his wife and his sister, Catherine de Bourbon, who, like her brother, had been detained in a kind of semi-captivity at the Court since the St. Bartholomew, should be given up to him. His desire to get possession of his wife proves the importance which he attached to her presence in his camp ; but, though Catherine de Bourbon was sent back, Henri III., on one pretext or another, continued to keep Marguerite in Paris.

As time went on, the King of Navarre grew more insistent, and, towards the end of September, despatched the Vicomte de Duras, one of his chamberlains, to Paris, with a request that Henri III. would give Marguerite into his charge, in order that he might conduct her to Béarn. The princess, on her side, did not fail to second Duras's efforts, for, though she had no particular desire for her husband's society, to be Queen at Nérac or Pau was to her mind an infinitely more pleasing prospect than that of remaining as a hostage in Paris. "I earnestly pressed the King to allow me to depart," she writes, "there being no longer any reason for refusing me. He replied, representing that it was his affection for me and the knowledge of what an ornament I was to his Court which made him desire to delay my departure as long as possible, and that it was his intention to escort me as far as Poitiers (the Court was then about to set out for Blois, for the meeting of the States-General, which had been one of the conditions of the Peace of Beaulieu) ; and sent M. de Duras back with this promise.

As a matter of fact, Henri III. had not the smallest intention of allowing Marguerite to rejoin her husband and carry with her into the camp of the enemy all the prestige and influence which attached to her in her

quality of a Daughter of France; and at the end of November 1576, when the Estates met, the Queen of Navarre found herself installed, with the rest of the Royal Family, in the Château of Blois.

The day before the Estates opened, the King summoned the Queen-Mother and some of his Council, and, having explained to them the importance of the League and the danger which it threatened to the royal authority, particularly if the Guises were elected its leaders, announced that "he had decided that the only way of arresting this dangerous combination, was to place himself at its head." He then, "to show his zeal for religion and prevent the election of any other leader," sent for the roll of the League, signed it himself, as its chief, and summoning all the principal personages of the Court, compelled every one, from his brother downwards, to follow his example.[1] The selfish and treacherous Anjou, after obtaining by the Peace of Beaulieu all that he desired, had been at little pains to conceal his dislike of his Protestant allies, and now deserted them without the smallest compunction.

The League, aided by the whole influence of the Court, had exerted itself to the utmost to terrorise the elections, and the Huguenots and "*Politiques*," seeing how matters were going, had held aloof, with the result that when the Estates met, they were altogether unrepresented. Anticipating that measures fatal to their interests would be passed, they wished to leave no pretext for describing the States-General of Blois as a full and free meeting of the representatives of the nation. In acting thus, they undoubtedly committed a grave error, since, notwithstanding their abstention and the terrorism

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

of the League, it was only after long and acrimonious debates and by a bare majority that the Third Estate voted in favour of the rupture of the edict, and to deprive the Protestants of all exercise of their religion, both in public and private. But to wage war effectively money was required, and, as the Estates absolutely declined to sanction any further alienation of the Crown lands, or, indeed, any other expedient for raising supplies, their vote was rendered valueless. Accordingly, they were dismissed by the King, who reproached them bitterly with their parsimony, but was probably well pleased at the check which the League had received.[1]

A few days before the opening of the States-General, another emissary from the King of Navarre, in the person of the Seigneur de Génissac,[2] arrived at Blois, to remind his Majesty that his promise to restore Marguerite to her husband was still unfulfilled. But the prince who had just made up his mind to violate a treaty, was not likely to attach much importance to a mere promise, and drove Génissac from his presence "with harsh and threatening words, telling him that he had given his sister to a Catholic, and not to a Huguenot, and that if the King her husband desired her presence, he had better turn Catholic again."[3]

Informed by Génissac of the rebuff which he had

[1] Mr. P. F. Willert, "Henry of Navarre and the Huguenots in France," p. 126.

[2] Bertrand de Pierrebuffière, one of the most intrepid companions-in-arms of Henri of Navarre. He figured, four years later, with Loignac, as "second" in a singularly murderous duel between Charles de Gontaut-Biron and Claude d'Escars, Prince de Carency, who was assisted by d'Estissac and La Bastide. Carency and both his seconds were killed.

[3] The King of Navarre had been publicly readmitted into the Calvinistic communion in June 1576.

received, Marguerite hastened to the Queen-Mother's cabinet, where she found both Catherine and the King, and reproached the latter bitterly with the deceit he had practised upon her and his broken promise. "I pointed out to him," she writes, "that I had not married for my own pleasure, nor at my own desire; that it had been by the desire and authority of King Charles, of the Queen my mother, and of himself; but that, since they had chosen my husband for me, they could not prevent me sharing his fortune; that I wished to go to him, and that, if they did not permit me to do so, I should effect my escape and depart as best I could, at the risk of my life."

"Now is not the time, my sister," said the King, "to importune me about this promise. I admit what you say, but I have procrastinated with the object of refusing it you altogether; for, since the King of Navarre has turned Huguenot again, I have never approved of your going to him. What the Queen my mother and I are doing, is for your good. I intend to make war on the Huguenots and to exterminate this miserable religion, which has done us so much evil; and it would be unseemly that you, who are a Catholic and my sister, should be in their hands, in the position of a hostage from me. And who knows whether, in order to offer me an irreparable insult, they might not wish to avenge themselves for the harm I intend them, by taking your life? No, no, you shall not go; and if, as you say, you attempt to escape, consider that you will have both myself and the Queen my mother as your bitter foes, and that we shall make you feel our enmity by every means in our power." [1]

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

The Queen of Navarre's position was now a most unpleasant one. Although the refusal of the Estates to vote supplies rendered any effective operations on the part of the royal troops difficult, if not impossible, hostilities began and were carried on with much ferocity on both sides. Marguerite had the sorrow and mortification of seeing her only allies, Anjou and Henri of Navarre, waging war upon each other; while she herself was obliged to remain under the yoke of Henri III. and Catherine, in the midst of a Court where her husband was proclaimed traitor and rebel, and where the King's favourites lost no opportunity of exasperating their master against him, and even ventured to propose schemes for his assassination.[1]

In order to escape from this intolerable situation, the Queen took counsel with some of her friends, "to discover some pretext for withdrawing from the Court, and, if possible, from the kingdom, until peace should be concluded, either under colour of making a pilgrimage, or paying a visit to one of her relatives." Among those whom she consulted, was the Princesse de la Roche-sur-Yon,[2] who happened to be on the point of setting out for Spa, to take the waters. *Monsieur* was also present, and had brought with him Mondoucet, the French representative in Flanders.

Mondoucet, who had but recently returned from a residence of several years in the Netherlands, had estab-

[1] On one occasion, Loignac, who, twelve years later, took the leading part in the assassination of Guise, proposed to go to Guienne, with ten trusty followers, and assassinate the King of Navarre. His offer, however, was not accepted

[2] Philippe de Montespedon, widow of Charles de Bourbon, Prince de la Roche-sur-Yon, Duc de Beaupréau, and mother of the Marquis de Beaupréau, already mentioned by Marguerite (see p. 26 *supra*).

lished intimate relations with the leaders of the revolutionary movement in the Catholic States, who had charged him, "to make the King understand that their hearts were entirely French, and that they were stretching out their arms towards him in welcome." Henri III., however, what with the League on one side and the Huguenots on the other, had too much on his hands at that moment to meddle with the affairs of his neighbours, and showed no desire to avail himself of the invitation. Mondoucet, an indefatigable intriguer, thereupon addressed himself to Anjou, "who, being possessed of a truly princely nature, cared only to engage in important enterprises, being born to conquer rather than to retain." The prospect of wresting the lost Burgundian fiefs from the Spaniard, and ruling them in the name of France, appealed strongly to that prince, who was as meddlesome and ambitious as he was treacherous and incapable, and who, having obtained all that he was ever likely to get in France by the recent treaty, was already beginning to cast about him for some fresh field for the exercise of his talents. He had, therefore, readily entered into Mondoucet's views, and it had been arranged that the latter should enter his service, and, under the pretext of escorting Madame de la Roche-sur-Yon to Spa, return to Flanders and continue his intrigues.

The astute Mondoucet was not slow to perceive the immense advantage which Anjou might derive from the presence in Flanders of his beautiful and fascinating sister, whose charms and winning manner, combined with the prestige which surrounded her, might do more in a week to pave the way for *Monsieur's* enterprise than the diplomatist could effect in a year. When, therefore, it was suggested that Marguerite should find some

excuse for quitting France until the war was over, he turned to Anjou and said, in a low voice : " If, *Monsieur*, the Queen of Navarre could feign some indisposition, for which the waters of Spa, whither Madame de la Roche-sur-Yon is bound, would be beneficial, it would be extremely advantageous to your enterprise in Flanders, where she would be able to strike an effective blow."

Anjou was delighted with the idea and exclaimed : " O Queen, seek nothing further ! You must go to the waters of Spa, whither the princess is going. I have remarked that you once had an erysipelas upon the arm. You must say that when the doctors ordered you these waters, the season was not so suitable for them, but that now is the proper time, and that you beg the King will permit you to go to Spa."

Marguerite, on her side, asked nothing better than to undertake the mission proposed to her. She was, as we have seen, tenderly attached to her brother, who, though repulsive both in appearance and character,[1] seems to have possessed for her some unaccountable attraction. Moreover, she had inherited the Valois love of adventure, and not a little of her mother's fondness

[1] L'Estoile says that the duke's face had been so disfigured by small-pox that he appeared to have two noses, and that after his treacherous attempt to seize Antwerp, in 1584, the Flemings made the following quatrain about him :

" Flamans, ne soiés etonnés
Si à François voiés deux nez,
Car par étoit raison et usage,
Faut deux nez à double visage."

The Duc de Bouillon tells us that previous to being attacked by the small-pox, Anjou was an extremely good-looking youth, but the disease transformed him into one of the ugliest men possible to behold.

for intrigue, and the enterprise was one which promised an abundance of both. Greatly to her relief, Henri III. and Catherine raised no obstacle in the way of her projected journey, though they must have had a shrewd suspicion of what lay behind it. However, so long as she did not rejoin her husband, neither of them cared very much where she went, or how she employed her time. As for Anjou and his ambitious projects, if he chose to pursue chimeras and perhaps get a few years in some Spanish fortress for his pains, that was his own affair, and the diversion of his meddlesome activity into some other realm than France might not be without its advantages. For which reason, Henri III. gave his consent readily enough to his sister's departure, and despatched a courier to Don Juan, who had lately succeeded Requescens as Governor of the Netherlands, begging him to furnish the Queen of Navarre with the passports she required to travel through Flanders, in order to reach Spa, which was situated in the bishopric of Liège.

CHAPTER XIV

The Queen of Navarre sets out for Flanders—Her suite—She arrives at Cambrai, and seduces the commandant of the citadel from his allegiance to his master—Her reception at Mons, where she gains over the Comte and Comtesse de Lalain to her brother's cause—Her meeting with Don Juan—Her stay at Namur as the guest of the prince—She departs for Liège and is in danger of being drowned, through an inundation of the Meuse—Her impressions of Liège—She receives alarming intelligence from *Monsieur*—She sets out on her return to France.

The Queen of Navarre did not set out on her journey immediately, but accompanied the Court to Chenonceaux, where Henri III. established himself, in order to be near Mayenne, who was laying siege to Brouage. At Chenonceaux she remained until May 28, 1577, when, after a final conference with Anjou, in regard to his projects and "the service he required of her," she started for Flanders. She was accompanied by the Princesse de la Roche-sur-Yon, Mesdames de Tournon,[1] and Castellane de Millon, Mlles. d'Atri,[2] de Tournon, and seven or eight other maids-of-honour, the handsome Philippe de Lenoncourt, Bishop of Auxerre, afterwards Cardinal, Charles d'Escars, Bishop of Langres, celebrated

[1] Claudine de la Tour-Turenne, wife of Justus II., Seigneur de Tournon, Comte de Roussillon.

[2] Anne d'Aquaviva, daughter of the Duke of Atri, a Neapolitan noble. She afterwards married the Comte de Châteaudun.

for his eloquence, the Marquis de Mouy, and the chief officers of her household.

Marguerite, who had inherited the sumptuous tastes of the Valois and the Medici, delighted in pomp and magnificence, and no princess of the time made a braver show when travelling, since, if her train was inconsiderable in comparison with those of the queens of the great States, this was atoned for by the elegance of her coaches and litters, the costly trappings of her horses and mules, and the rich liveries of her servants. "I journeyed," she writes, "in a litter fashioned with pillars, lined inside with rose-coloured Spanish velvet, embroidered in gold and having hangings of shot-silk adorned with devices. The sides of the litter were of glass, each pane of which was covered with devices, there being on the windows or on the lining forty different ones altogether, with mottoes in Spanish and Italian concerning the sun and its influences. This was followed by the litter of Madame de la Roche-sur-Yon, by that of Madame de Tournon, my *dame d'honneur*, by ten young ladies on horseback, accompanied by their *gouvernantes*, and by six coaches, or chariots, containing the rest of the ladies in attendance upon the princess and myself."

By easy stages, the Queen passed through Picardy, "where the towns had orders from the King to receive her with the honour due to her," and reached Catelet, three leagues from the frontier. Here she received a message from Louis de Barlemont, Bishop of Cambrai, who sent to inquire the hour at which she proposed leaving Catelet, in order that he might meet her at the entrance of his State.[1] She answered that she would

[1] The town of Cambrai and the country surrounding it, after many vicissitudes, which caused people to declare that Cambrai did not know

arrive that same evening, but, according to a manuscript, published by the *Bulletin de la Société de académique*, a very opportune coach-accident compelled her to pass the night at an inn on the road, where a gentleman, "afflicted, doubtless through sympathy, with an erysipelas of the face," had arrived that morning. The writer adds that the gentleman in question was none other than Marguerite's old lover, the Duc de Guise, who had chosen this pretext for concealing the scar on his cheek, which he had received at the Battle of Dormans, and which had earned him the name of "*la Balafré*"; and that, before she resumed her journey, the princess gave him ample proof that, if Fate had bestowed her hand on another, her heart—or at least some portion of it—still belonged to the duke.[1]

At Cambrai, the Queen was received by the bishop, "who was well-attended by persons having the dress and appearance of real Flemings, who, in this part of the country, are very stoutly built."[2] The bishop entertained his royal visitor to a supper followed by a ball, to which he invited all the principal ladies of the town. But, "being of a formal and punctilious disposition," he did not apparently consider it quite consistent with the character of his sacred office to be present at the

whether it belonged to France, Spain, or the Empire, formed, at this period, an independent state, governed by the bishop, but under the protection of Spain. The town was definitely ceded to France, in 1678, by the Treaty of Nimeugen

[1] Cited by M. Charles Merki, *La Reine Margot et la fin des Valois*, p. 154.

[2] "*Ils sont fort grossiers.*" The word "*grossier*" is now generally used in an uncomplimentary sense; but, according to Mongez, it had in the sixteenth century a different significance, and expressed only "*la hauteur et l'épaisseur du corps.*"

latter entertainment, and, so soon as supper was concluded, begged permission of the Queen to retire, leaving M. d'Inchy, the commandant of the citadel of Cambrai, to do the honours.

The prelate's retirement was an unexpected stroke of good fortune for our fair intriguer, since the town of Cambrai and its citadel was considered the key of Flanders, and if, by any means, the commandant could be won over to Anjou's cause, the duke would secure a footing in the country of which it would be far from easy to deprive him. The princess, accordingly, brought every weapon in the arsenal of her charms to bear upon the hapless d'Inchy, and to such good purpose that the commandant was soon completely in her toils. "God vouchsafed that I should be so successful," she says, "and that he should take so much pleasure in my conversation that, after considering how he could contrive to see as much as possible of me, he arranged to bear me company so long as I remained in Flanders, and, with this object, requested permission of his master [the Bishop of Cambrai] to escort me so far as Namur, where Don Juan of Austria was awaiting me, saying that he wished to witness the splendour of my reception; which permission this Spaniardised Fleming was so ill advised as to accord."

Long before Namur was reached, the enamoured commandant had confided to his enchantress that "his sympathies were wholly French, and that he was only longing for the day when he might have so gallant a prince as her brother for lord and master." So that it is little wonder that the delighted princess thought him "a finished gentleman, entirely devoid of the ingrained rusticity of the Flemings," and far superior to the

"Spaniardised Fleming," his master, "in both the graces and accomplishments of mind and body."

From Cambrai, the Queen proceeded to Valenciennes, near which town she was met by the Comte de Lalain, Grand Bailiff of Hainault, his brother Emmanuel de Lalain, Baron de Montigny, and a number of other noblemen and gentlemen. Marguerite and her company appear to have been much impressed by the fountains, clocks, and "the handiwork peculiar to the Germans," which they found at Valenciennes, and which "inspired our French folk with great astonishment, they being all unused to behold clocks which discourse agreeable vocal music."

After remaining a day at Valenciennes, Lalain escorted the distinguished travellers to Mons, where his wife, and his sister-in-law, the Marquise d'Havrec, "with at least eighty or a hundred ladies belonging to the country or the town," were waiting to welcome her, by whom she was received "not like a foreign princess, but as though she had been their rightful liege-lady."

Lalain, indeed, who was a personage of considerable wealth and great influence in Flanders, was already half-won over. He had, Marguerite tells us, always been hostile to the Spanish domination, and had been greatly incensed by the execution of his relative, d'Egmont, in 1568. A devout Catholic, he had held aloof from William of Orange and the Protestants; but, on the other hand, had refused to meet Don Juan or allow him or any other Spanish representative to enter his government. His countess, who exercised great influence over her husband, was likewise strongly anti-Spanish in her sympathies, and Marguerite was, therefore, encouraged to open her mind to her freely. She,

accordingly, represented to her that, although, owing to the pressure of internal troubles, it was impossible for the King of France to engage in any foreign enterprise, there was another deliverer ready and anxious to come forward, in the person of her brother Anjou, of whose valour, prudence, generosity, and military skill she then proceeded to paint a most alluring picture, adding that it would be impossible for them to appeal to a prince whose assistance would be more valuable, "since he was so near a neighbour, and had so large a kingdom as that of France at his service, whence he could draw the money and the material necessary for conducting the war."

The princess seems to have put the case for her brother with considerable skill; the Comtesse de Lalain forthwith became a devoted partisan of the duke, and had little difficulty in persuading her husband to follow her example. In consequence, when, at the end of a week, Marguerite left Mons, Hainault was assured to Anjou as well as Cambrai, and the road thus opened to the very heart of Flanders. It had also been agreed that, on her return from Spa, Marguerite should make a stay at her chateau of La Fère,[1] in Picardy, where *Monsieur* should join her, and that Lalain's brother, Montigny, should repair thither to treat with the duke, on behalf of the Catholic States.

Before leaving Mons, the Queen of Navarre presented her host and hostess with magnificent tokens of her goodwill. To the Comtesse de Lalain she gave a casket of jewels, and to her husband a chain and pendant enriched with precious stones, "which were accounted

[1] The Château of La Fêre belonged to the House of Bourbon, and had been ceded by Henri of Navarre to his wife on their marriage.

of great value, and were still further esteemed by them as coming from one whom they loved as they did her."

At Mons, Marguerite had been warmly welcomed by those who regarded her as the representative of the House and the nation, to whom they looked for their emancipation; at Namur, she was to meet the oppressors of the people whose ally she had now become, and to be the guest of a governor-general, whose mission it was to discover and thwart any intrigues in which France might be tempted to indulge with his subjects. After the death of Requescens, Philip II. had sent his half-brother to Flanders, not to fight but to treat; and before entering the country, the prince had been compelled to accept the Treaty of Ghent—the "Perpetual Edict"—whereby the liberties of the Netherlands were confirmed, and the right of levying taxes restored to the Estates, who, in return, promised to recognise Don Juan as their governor, so soon as the last Spanish soldier should have left the provinces. But the Treaty of Ghent was merely a truce; no sooner had the Spanish soldiers been sent away, than Don Juan began to bring them back again; and the States, exasperated by this breach of faith, were already on the point of open rebellion.

The Comte de Lalain, accompanied by a number of Flemish nobles and gentlemen, escorted Marguerite some distance beyond the frontier of Hainault. But when Don Juan and his suite appeared in the distance, the count and his friends bade her farewell, since, owing to the very strained relations which existed between the leaders of the States and the governor-general, their meeting would have been exceedingly embarrassing for both sides. D'Inchy, however, remained with the

princess, as his master, the Bishop of Cambrai, belonged to the Spanish party.

Don Juan came attended by the Duc d'Aerschot and his son, the Marquis d'Havrec, of the House of Crÿ, and two brothers of the family of Rye, the Baron de Balançon and the Marquis de Varembon, the first of whom was Governor of Franche-Comté, who had come to Namur on purpose to meet the Queen. With the exception of Ludovic de Gonzague, "who called himself a relative of the Duke of Mantua," none of Don Juan's own staff were of any particular note, and Marguerite remarked the significant absence of the Flemish nobility about the son of Charles V.

The hero of Lepanto was then in his thirty-second year, "*le prince de l'Europe le plus beau et le mieux fait*"; "endowed by Nature with a cast of countenance so gay and pleasing that there was hardly any one whose good-will and love he did not immediately win"; very sumptuous and fastidious in his attire, and reported to be a great admirer of the fair. He was already acquainted with the Queen of Navarre, having stayed for a few days in Paris, on his way from Italy to the Netherlands, and attended a ball at the Louvre, expressly, so Brantôme tells us, to have the pleasure of beholding the princess of whose charms he had heard so much. And it was on this occasion that he expressed the opinion, which we have already cited, that, "although her beauty was rather divine than human, it was more calculated to ruin and damn men than to save them."

"Don Juan," continues Marguerite, "alighted from his horse, in order to salute me in my litter. I saluted him in the French fashion,[1] and the Duc d'Aerschot and

[1] By offering him her cheek to kiss.

M. d'Havrec also. After a few complimentary speeches, he remounted his horse, but continued to converse with me until we came to the town, where we did not arrive until after nightfall, since the ladies of Mons had not permitted me to depart until the last moment, and had likewise amused me more than an hour, by examining my litter, taking great delight in making me explain the different devices. Everything at Namur was so admirably ordered—since the Spaniards are excellent managers in this respect—and the town with its windows and shops so well lighted, that it seemed as though illuminated by a second day."

Don Juan had prepared for his guest a lodging worthy of one who was, at the same time, a Daughter of France and a sister of the Queen of Spain. "The house, in which he installed me," she says, "had been specially arranged for my reception. A large and beautiful salon had been contrived, with a suite of apartments consisting of bedrooms and cabinets, the whole of which were furnished with the most beautiful, costly, and superb hangings that I think I have ever beheld, being entirely composed of velvet and satin tapestries, with representations of pillars in cloth of silk, covered with embroideries in great rows and quiltings of gold, in the fullest and most beautiful relief that it was possible to behold. And in the midst of these columns, divers great personages were depicted, habited in antique costume, and wrought in the same kind of embroidery." The princess adds that the Bishop of Auxerre, who had become on very friendly terms with the Duc d'Aerschot, learned from him that the stuffs of which these hangings were composed, were a gift to Don Juan from a wealthy Turkish pacha, in recognition of the prince's magnanimity in restoring to

him, without ransom, his two sons, whom he had taken prisoners at Lepanto. Don Juan sent the pacha's gift to Milan, the taste of whose upholsterers was celebrated throughout Europe, to have them made into the superb tapestries which so delighted the Queen of Navarre; "and, in order to be reminded of the glorious manner in which he had acquired them, he caused the bed and tester which were in the Queen's chamber, to be embroidered with naval battles, representing the victory that he had gained over the Turks." "Did ever more perfect beauty," exclaims the enthusiastic M. de Saint-Poncy, "repose on a more glorious couch?"

In the morning, Don Juan escorted the Queen to hear Mass, which was performed according to the Spanish custom, with an accompaniment of violins and cornets. Afterwards, he entertained her to a banquet, at which Marguerite and the prince dined at a table apart from the rest, Ludovic de Gonzague serving them with wine on bended knee. "When the tables were cleared, dancing began, which lasted all the afternoon. The evening was passed in the same fashion, Don Juan continuing to devote himself to me, and observing frequently that he saw in me a resemblance to the Queen, 'his Signore,' by whom he meant the late Queen my sister, whom he had greatly honoured, and showing, by all the respect and courtesy in his power, the extreme pleasure he experienced at seeing me there."

Marguerite had only intended remaining one night at Namur; but, as the boats by which she intended to ascend the Meuse so far as Liège could not be made ready so soon as she had expected, she was compelled to defer her departure until the morrow. Don Juan took advantage of the delay to arrange a water-picnic for his guest's

DON JUAN OF AUSTRIA

From a contemporary Spanish Print

Tom. I Pag. 330

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diversion. A large boat gaily decorated with flags, and accompanied by a number of smaller ones, filled with musicians playing on hautboys, cornets, and violins, conveyed the princess to an island in the Meuse. Here the governor had caused a banquet to be prepared, "in a spacious room fashioned and decorated with ivy, around which were compartments occupied by musicians, who played upon hautboys and other instruments during the whole of supper time." After supper, the company danced for about an hour, and then returned to Namur.

On the morrow, the Queen bade farewell to Don Juan, and continued her journey. If we are to believe Brantôme, brief as had been her stay in their midst, she had succeeded in completely captivating all the Spanish officers, who were heard to declare that "the conquest of such a beauty was worth more than that of a kingdom, and that happy would be the soldiers who could serve under her banner."[1] It may, therefore, have been just as well for the allegiance of Don Juan's followers that his charming guest did not prolong her visit to Namur.

Hitherto Marguerite's journey had been a smiling odyssey; but now disasters began. Mlle. de Tournon, one of her maids-of-honour, was suddenly taken ill, and died a few days after their arrival at Liège, according to her mistress's account, of a broken heart, caused by the indifference to her charms of the Marquis de Varembon, already mentioned, with whom the poor young lady was passionately in love. At Huy, the first town of the diocese of Liège, they were surprised by an inundation of the river, "and had barely time to spring on shore and run with all speed to gain the summit of the hill,[2] before the

[1] *Dames illustres.*

[2] Huy is situated on the slope of a hill.

water had risen almost to the level of the house in which they had taken refuge, and where they had to content themselves for the night with what the master of the house had to give them."

However, the party reached Liège in safety, where the Queen met with a most cordial reception from the bishop,[1] "an exceedingly virtuous, discreet, and amiable nobleman," who insisted on surrendering to her his own palace, which Marguerite found "handsome and commodious, possessing beautiful fountains, gardens and galleries, the whole so richly painted and gilded, and the interior decorated with so much marble that nothing could be more magnificent."

The princess was as favourably impressed with the famous old cathedral city as with its bishop. "The town," she says, "is larger than Lyons, and resembles it in point of structure, as the River Meuse flows through its midst. It is very well built, and there is not a canon's house which does not present the appearance of a noble palace,[2] the streets long and broad, the squares spacious and provided with beautiful fountains; the churches decorated with so much marble—which is obtained hard by—that they appear to be entirely constructed of it; the clocks of German workmanship, chiming, and representing all kinds of instruments."

As Spa was only about six leagues from Liège, and was, at this period, nothing but a small village, where it would have been impossible for the Queen of Navarre and her suite to have found suitable accommodation, Marguerite and the Princesse de la Roche-sur-Yon decided to remain

[1] Gerard Groesbeck. He was made a cardinal in the following year, and died in 1584.

[2] The canons of Liège, Marguerite tells us, were all of noble birth, the sons of great German nobles.

at Liège, and have the waters brought to them, the doctors assuring their distinguished patients that "it would lose none of its strength or virtue, if it were conveyed by night before the sun had risen."

In spite of the sad death of Mlle. de Tournon, Marguerite seems to have passed a very pleasant time at Liège, where the bishop, his canons, the gentry of the neighbourhood, and several distinguished foreign visitors formed with her own suite a little Court, and vied with one another in their efforts to amuse her. In the midst of her gaiety, we may well suppose that she did not permit herself to lose sight of the real object of her journey, and that her brother's cause was strengthened by more than one important accession.

Six weeks passed—the time usually prescribed for the Spa waters—and Marguerite and her company were on the point of setting out on their return to France, when news arrived that the States had risen in revolt, and that the whole of Flanders was being ravaged by fire and sword. Hard upon this alarming intelligence, came a gentleman named Lescar, bearing a letter from Anjou to his sister, which contained still more disquieting information. The duke wrote that, "although God had given him the grace to serve the King so well in the command of the army entrusted to him, that he had taken every town which he had been ordered to attack, and driven the Huguenots out of all the provinces which it had been intended that his army should subdue," he was in worse odour at Court than ever; that Bussy, notwithstanding his services in the field,[1] was also in disgrace, and as much

[1] These services included the ravaging of some score or more square leagues of country in Maine and Anjou, in which the enterprising Bussy robbed Huguenot and Catholic with praiseworthy impartiality.

persecuted as he had been during the lifetime of Du Guast; that every day one or other of them was subjected to some fresh indignity; that the *mignons* by whom the King was surrounded had contrived to seduce four or five of his most trusted followers from their allegiance to *Monsieur*, and persuade them to enter his Majesty's service; and, finally, that the King bitterly repented of having permitted Marguerite to make this expedition to Flanders, and that, out of hatred of his brother, he had secretly warned the Spaniards of the true object of her journey, in consequence of which, they intended to seize her on her way back to France, while, even if she were so fortunate as to escape falling into their hands, she would probably be captured by the Huguenots, who were burning to avenge themselves upon Anjou, for his desertion of their cause.

This letter, Marguerite tells us, provided her with abundant food for reflection, since, not only would she be obliged, in order to gain France, to pass through country occupied either by Spaniards or Protestants, but the loyalty of her suite was far from being above suspicion. Lenoncourt, though a bishop, was believed to favour the Protestant cause, of which party her first equerry, Salviati, and her treasurer, Hubanet, were also secret adherents; while, on the other hand, the Bishop of Langres was known to be strongly Spanish in his sympathies.

"In my perplexity," writes the princess, "I was only able to confide in Madame de la Roche-sur-Yon and Madame de Tournon, who, realising our danger and aware that it would take us five or six days to reach La Fère—during the whole of which time we should be at the mercy of one or other of these parties—replied to me, with

tears in their eyes, that God alone could save us in this hour of peril; that I must commend myself to His care, and then act as He should inspire me ; that, as for themselves, notwithstanding that one was ill and the other old, I was not, on that account, to hesitate to travel by long stages, as they would undertake anything in order to deliver me from this danger.

Marguerite then confided her troubles to the sympathetic ear of the Bishop of Liège, " who behaved like a father to her," and offered her the services of the grand-master of his Household, and horses to convey her as far as she desired ; and, as a passport from William of Orange would probably be respected by the Protestants, she despatched Mondoucet to him to obtain one. Mondoucet, however, did not return, the fact being that William, who had penetrated the mystery of Marguerite's intrigues, and had no desire to see himself supplanted in the direction of affairs by a foreign prince, declined either to send the passport or to allow the envoy to depart.

After waiting two or three days, the Queen of Navarre's patience was exhausted, and she announced her intention of taking her departure on the morrow. The Bishop of Auxerre and her treasurer, Salviati, strongly urged her to await the arrival of the expected passport, and when they found their counsel unheeded, the latter declared that there was not sufficient money in his hands even to defray the cost of their stay in Liège, to say nothing of the journey before them ; a statement which, when Marguerite, on her arrival in France, examined her accounts, was found to be false, " there being enough to pay the expenses of her Household for more than six weeks." The difficulty was eventually surmounted

by the intervention of Madame de la Roche-sur-Yon, who advanced the sum required, and, after having presented the hospitable bishop with a magnificent diamond worth three thousand écus, and his servants with rings or gold chains, the princess bade farewell to the good town of St. Hubert, and set out on her return to France, "with nothing in the shape of a passport save her trust in God."

CHAPTER XV

Marguerite's adventures at Huy and Dinant—Attempt of the Spaniards to seize her at the latter town—She outwits them, with the assistance of the townspeople, and continues her journey—Perilous situation at Fleurines—At Cateau-Cambrésis she learns that the Huguenots are lying in wait for her on the French frontier—She escapes them and proceeds to her château of La Fère, where she is joined by *Monsieur*—Visit of the Flemish delegates to La Fère.

If Marguerite's journey to Liège had resembled a royal progress, her return thence was like the retreat of a beaten army through a hostile country, with every stage marked by some perilous adventure. Her first day's journey brought her to Huy, the place where she and her party had so narrowly escaped being drowned a few weeks previously. This town was under the sovereignty of the bishop, but, on the outbreak of the insurrection, it had declared for the States, and refused any longer to recognise the authority of its lord, who had announced his intention of observing a strict neutrality. "In consequence of this," writes Marguerite, "the townsfolk paid no attention to the bishop's grand-master, who accompanied us, but, having been alarmed, just as I arrived, by the news that Don Juan had seized upon the citadel of Namur, no sooner had we reached our lodging, than they began sounding the tocsin, dragging the artillery about the streets, and pointing it against my lodging, before the entrance to which they stretched

chains, in order to prevent our communicating with one another. And in this state of disquietude they left us all night, without giving us an opportunity of remonstrating with them, being all common persons, brutal and unreasoning."

By the morning, the alarm of the good folk of Huy had somewhat subsided, and they permitted the travellers to depart, though not before they had taken the precaution to line the sides of the street in which the Queen's lodging was situated with serried rows of portly burghers armed to the teeth, through which the travellers solemnly defiled, and arrived the same evening at Dinant, where a far more exciting and picturesque adventure awaited them. As however, this is not only one of the most interesting episodes of Marguerite's journey, but reveals the princess at her very best as a writer, we cannot do better than follow the example of her French biographers, M. de Saint-Poncy and M. Charles Merki, and permit her to relate it in her own words :

" We proceeded to Dinant, where we passed the night, and where, by ill-chance, the townsfolk had that very day elected their burgomasters, who are equivalent to consuls in Gascony and sheriffs in France. The whole place was that day given over to carousing, every one was drunk, none of the magistrates obeyed, in short, there was a veritable chaos of confusion. And, to make our position worse, the grand-master of the Bishop of Liège had formerly been at war with these people, and was regarded by them as a mortal foe.

" This town, when in its right senses, is upon the side of the States ; but now Bacchus reigned there supreme ; the people had lost all self-control, and recognised no one's authority. So soon as they perceived us

approaching the outskirts with a numerous train, they forthwith were seized with alarm. Leaving their glasses, they flew to arms, and, instead of opening the gates, rushed tumultuously to close the barrier against us.

"I had despatched a gentleman in advance, together with the foragers and the *maréchal-des-logis*,[1] to beg the townsfolk to permit us to enter; but I found they had all been stopped at the barrier, where no attention was paid to their demands. Finally, I stood up in my litter, and, removing my mask, made a sign to one of the most important persons that I desired to speak with him; and, on his approaching me, I begged that he would enjoin silence, in order that I might make myself heard. When this had with great difficulty been effected, I informed them who I was, and of the object of my journey, and that, far from desiring any harm to them by my coming, I did not wish even to give them cause for suspecting such a thing; that I begged them to grant admittance to my women and myself for that night, together with as few of my male attendants as they pleased, and that the rest should remain in the suburbs. To this proposal they assented and granted my request.

"I entered their town thus, attended by the most important persons of my company, amongst whom was the Bishop of Liège's grand-master, who was unhappily recognised just as I was entering my lodging, with all this armed and drunken mob at my heels. Thereupon, they began hurling insults at this worthy fellow, and wished to set upon him, although he was a venerable old man, with a white beard descending to his girdle.

[1] The *maréchal-des-logis* was an officer whose duty it was to precede the Court or the households of great personages when travelling, to make arrangements for their accommodation.

I made him enter my lodging, against the earthen walls of which these drunkards directed a shower of balls from their arquebuses.

"Upon perceiving this tumult, I inquired if the master of the house were within. By good fortune, he happened to be at home. I begged him to go to the window and arrange for me to speak to the leading townspeople, which he did everything possible to accomplish. At last, having shouted for some time through the windows, the burgomasters came to speak with me, so drunk that they knew not what they were saying. I assured them that I was quite unaware that this grand-master was their enemy, and represented to them how serious a thing it was to offend a person of my quality, who was a friend of all the principal lords of the States, and that I was sure that the Comte de Lalain and all the other leaders would be greatly annoyed at the reception which they had given me. At the mention of M. de Lalain's name, they all assumed a different attitude, and evinced more respect for him than for any of the kings to whom I was related. The eldest among them inquired, smiling and hesitating, whether I was indeed a friend of M. de Lalain; and I, perceiving that my relationship to him was of more service to me than that of all the potentates in Christendom, replied: 'Yes, I am his friend and likewise his kinswoman.' Upon this, they did me reverence, kissed my hand, and became as courteous as they had before been insolent, begging me to excuse their behaviour, and promising that they would do no harm to the worthy grand-master, and suffer him to depart, with me."

But Marguerite was not yet out of her troubles.

"Upon the following morning," she continues, "as

I was about to proceed to Mass, a person named Du Bois—the agent whom the King (Henri III.) had placed near Don Juan, and who was strongly Spanish in his sympathies—arrived, and informed me that he had received letters from the King, charging him to seek me and conduct me safely on my homeward journey; that, for this purpose, he had begged Don Juan to place Barlemont, with a troop of cavalry at his disposal, to serve as an escort and to conduct me in safety to Namur, and that I must request the townspeople to permit M. de Barlemont, who was one of the nobles of the country, to enter with his troops, to escort me out of the town.

"This had been planned with a double object; first, to seize the town for Don Juan, and, secondly, to cause me to fall into the hands of the Spaniards. I found myself in very great perplexity; but, after taking counsel with the Cardinal de Lenoncourt,[1] who was no more anxious than I was to fall into Spanish hands, we decided that we must ascertain from the townspeople whether there were not some road whereby I might escape M. de Barlemont's troop. I, therefore, left the little agent Du Bois to entertain M. de Lenoncourt, and passed into another apartment, whither I summoned some of the townsfolk and informed them that, if they admitted M. de Barlemont's troop, they would be lost, as they would seize the town for Don Juan. I counselled them to arm, and to hold themselves in readiness at their gate, in the attitude of men who had been forewarned and had no intention of allowing themselves to be surprised, and only to permit M. de Barlemont to enter alone, without any of his followers.

[1] Lenoncourt, Bishop of Auxerre, was not created a cardinal until 1585.

"As the effect of the wine of the preceding day had passed off, they approved my reasons, and believing what I said, offered to risk their lives in my service, and to furnish me with a guide to conduct me out of the town by a road which would place the river between myself and Don Juan's soldiers, and leave them so far behind that it would be impossible for them to overtake me; while I was to travel by way of such houses and towns as were on the side of the States.

"Having arrived at this decision with them I sent them to admit M. de Barlemont alone, who, so soon as he had entered, endeavoured to persuade them to allow his followers to enter likewise. But, upon that, they turned upon him, and were like to have put him to death, vowing that if he did not withdraw his men out of sight of the town, they would fire upon them with their artillery. This they did in order to allow me time to cross the river before the soldiers could overtake me.

"After M. de Barlemont had been admitted into the town, he and the agent Du Bois used every possible persuasion to induce me to proceed to Namur, where Don Juan was awaiting me; and, after having heard Mass and partaken of a hasty dinner, I left my lodging, accompanied by two or three hundred armed citizens, and, whilst continuing to converse with M. de Barlemont and the agent Du Bois, took my way straight to the river-gate, which was in the opposite direction to the Namur road, where M. de Barlemont's men were drawn up. They, summoning up their courage, told me that I was not going in the right direction; but I, holding them still in conversation, continued my way until I arrived at the gate of the town. I passed through it, accompanied by a part of the townsfolk, and redoubling my speed

towards the river, embarked on the boat awaiting me, which I made all my suite enter as quickly as possible; M. de Barlemont and the agent Du Bois calling out to me all the while from the water-side that I was not doing right, since I was acting contrary to the wishes of the King, who desired me to pass by way of Namur.

"In spite of their remonstrances, we promptly crossed the river; and, whilst our litters and horses were being conveyed across, which necessitated two or three journeys, the citizens, in order to enable me to gain time, entertained M. de Barlemont and the agent Du Bois with grievances and complaints, arguing with them, in their patois, about the wrong Don Juan had committed in breaking faith with the States, and putting an end to the peace, and about the old quarrels relating to Comte d'Egmont's death, threatening all the time that if M. de Barlemont's soldiers appeared near the town, they would open fire upon them with their artillery. They thus gave me time to proceed so far that I had no longer any cause to fear these soldiers, guided as I was by God and by the man with whom they had provided me."[1]

In the evening, the Queen arrived at a château called Fleurines, belonging to a nobleman of that name, a zealous partisan of the States and a friend of the Comte de Lalain. Marguerite had no doubt that she would receive from the Seigneur de Fleurines a very cordial welcome; but, unfortunately, when she arrived, that gentleman happened to be from home, and had left his wife in charge during his absence. Apparently, he had not failed to impress upon her the necessity of guarding against one of those surprises so frequent during these wars, for the moment the princess and her company

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

had entered the outer courtyard of the château, the gates of which had been left open, the good lady took fright and fled to the keep, "raising the drawbridge, and determined, however much they might entreat, not to allow them to come in." Almost at the same moment, a body of some three hundred Spaniards, whom Don Juan had sent to intercept Marguerite and seize upon the Château of Fleurines, where he had ascertained that she intended to stay that night, appeared upon an eminence about a thousand paces off.

The situation of the travellers was now a very precarious one, for the outer court was defended only by a wretched wall and a rickety door, which could be forced with very little trouble, and the terrified châtelaine continued deaf to all entreaties to admit them into the fortified part of the building. Happily, however, the Spaniards were too far off to comprehend the situation of affairs, and, having seen the Queen and her suite enter the château, supposed them to be in safety, and, accordingly, quartered themselves on a village hard-by, intending to seize them when they took their departure on the morrow.

At night-fall, however, to the intense relief of the whole party, M. de Fleurines arrived, having been despatched by the Comte de Lalain to escort the Queen of Navarre through Flanders, as the count himself was unable to leave the army of the States, of which he had been appointed commander. M. de Fleurines seems to have brought with him a considerable following, for when Marguerite and her party left the château, the following morning, the Spaniards did not attempt to molest them.

Their journey was pleasant and uneventful, and " they

did not pass through any town in which she was not honourably and amicably received." The princess's only regret was that she was unable to travel by way of Mons and see her friend, Madame de Lalain, again. From Nivelles, she sent a letter to the countess to inform her of her whereabouts and her disappointment at being prevented from paying her a return visit, upon receiving which that lady despatched "some persons of quality" to escort the Queen to the frontier of Cambrésis. On taking leave of them, Marguerite begged them to take to Madame de Lalain, as a souvenir of their friendship, "one of her gowns, composed of black satin, all covered with raised embroideries, which she had heard her admire very much when she wore it at Mons, and which had cost her twelve hundred crowns."

But the Queen had yet another adventure in store for her. At Cateau-Cambrésis, she received warning that a band of French Protestants, rivalling in audacity her foreign enemies, were lying in wait for her on the frontier. Marguerite, however, displayed her customary presence of mind, and, suspecting that her treasurer, Salviati, and other members of her suite were in communication with the Huguenots, gave orders that the party should resume their journey an hour before daybreak. Upon sending for their litters and horses, however, "the Chevalier Salviati began procrastinating just as he had done at Liège," whereupon, continues the princess, "since I knew that he did this with an object, I abandoned my litter, and, mounting on horseback, followed by those of my people who were ready first, succeeded in reaching Catelet by two o'clock in the afternoon, having thus, through the mercy of God, escaped all the snares and pitfalls of my enemies."

From Catelet, Marguerite proceeded to her château of La Fère, where she arrived on October 1, 1577. At Le Fère, she found a messenger from the Duc d'Anjou awaiting her, with orders to return and inform his master immediately the Queen arrived. The duke wrote that peace had already been concluded,[1] and that the King was on the point of return to Paris ; but that, as regarded himself, " his condition had gone from bad to worse," and he and his friends were subjected to so many slights and indignities that he had no desire to reside there, and awaited her arrival at La Fère with extreme impatience, in order that he might join her. Marguerite at once sent back the courier, and *Monsieur*, having despatched Bussy to Angers, with the greater part of his Household, set out for Picardy, accompanied by only some fifteen or twenty attendants.[2]

Marguerite assures us that it was one of the greatest pleasures which she had ever experienced to receive under her own roof " one whom she loved and honoured so much," and that she devoted herself to his entertainment with such success " that he would willingly have exclaimed with St. Peter : ' Here let us raise our tabernacles,' had it not been that ' the right royal courage and generosity of soul which distinguished him incited him to nobler deeds.' The tranquillity of our Court," she continues, " compared wth the agitations of the one from which he came, rendered all the pleasures which he tasted there so sweet, that he could not prevent himself from perpetually exclaiming : ' Oh, my queen,

[1] At Bergerac, September 17, 1577.

[2] " Wednesday, 9th October, *Monsieur*, brother of the King, arrived in Paris . . . whence he set out on Saturday the 12th to go to La Fère, in Picardy, to see the Queen of Navarre, his sister."—L'Estoile.

how sweet it is to be with you. *Mon Dieu !* This society is a paradise replete with all manner of delights, while that from which I came is a hell filled with all kinds of dissensions and torments.' "

It will be remembered that when Marguerite had negotiated at Mons the alliance of the Comte de Lalain, it had been agreed that on her return to France, she should place Anjou in communication with the leaders of the States, for which purpose, Lalain should send his brother, the Baron de Montigny, to La Fère. *Monsieur*, having expressed his approval of this arrangement, towards the end of November, Montigny arrived at La Fère, accompanied by four or five other Flemish nobles.

The delegates, who were received by the fair châtelaine with that charming affability which gained all hearts, assured Anjou of the devotion of a great part of the nobility, and promised him, in Lalain's name, the whole of Hainault and Artois, with their fortresses. One of them, also, was the bearer of a letter from M. d'Inchy, the gentleman whom Marguerite's charms had so completely subjugated, offering to place the citadel of Cambrai in the duke's hands After several conferences, it was decided that Anjou should enter Flanders with his troops in the following spring, and that, while he occupied himself in raising men, his Flemish allies should foment a movement in his favour. Montigny and his colleagues then returned home, carrying with them, as a pledge of the alliance just concluded, gold medals bearing the portraits of the duke and the Queen of Navarre; while *Monsieur* forthwith set out for Paris, to endeavour to obtain from Henri III. the necessary assistance for his enterprise.[1]

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

Such was the conclusion of Marguerite's eventful journey to the Netherlands, which, as one of her biographers very justly remarks, unites to the attraction of a romance the importance of a political mission,[1] and in which, it must be admitted, the princess displayed qualities but seldom found in one of her sex: great courage and presence of mind, a rare tact, and considerable diplomatic ability. If Anjou's enterprise was doomed to failure, it was due to the ill-will of Henri III., and because he himself was altogether unequal to the part which he aspired to play, and was certainly not the fault of his courageous and talented sister, for very seldom have the initial difficulties of so important an undertaking been overcome with so much skill and address.

[1] Comte Léo de Saint-Poncy, *Marguerite de Valois*, i. 475.

CHAPTER XVI

The Queen of Navarre returns to Paris—She demands and obtains a new promise from the King and Queen-Mother to permit her to join her husband, and also to assign her her dowry in lands—Henri III. opposed to Anjou's Flemish enterprise—Quarrels of Bussy and the *mignons*—Insolent behaviour of the King's favourites towards *Monsieur*—The latter seeks permission to withdraw for a time from Court, but is arrested by order of the King—An extraordinary scene—*Monsieur* is set at liberty, but forbidden to leave the Louvre—Aided by Marguerite, he again escapes and retires to Angers—Unsuccessful effort of Catherine to induce him to return.

SHORTLY after her brother's departure, Marguerite, in her turn, set out for Paris, where she had determined to renew her request to Henri III. to permit her to rejoin her husband in Gascony. At Saint-Denis, she was met by the King, the Queen, the Queen-Mother, Anjou, and the whole Court, and received with much cordiality, "their Majesties taking great pleasure in making her describe the splendour and magnificence of her journey and sojourn at Liège, and the adventures consequent upon her return."

Marguerite took advantage of the good-humour which Henri III. and Catherine seemed to be in to make her request to them that very evening, "entreating them not to take it amiss, if she begged them to consent to her going to rejoin her husband, since, as peace was now concluded, there was nothing which could excite their

suspicion, and it would be unseemly and injurious for her, if she deferred her departure any longer." Both their Majesties appeared to approve of her resolution, and Catherine declared that she would herself accompany her daughter to the South, as it was necessary that she should visit that part of the country in the interests of the King; and she told Henri that he ought to furnish his sister with the funds necessary for her journey; which he promised to do.

Emboldened by the success of her application, the princess then reminded her mother of the promise she had made her at the time of the Peace of Beaulieu; that, in the event of her returning to her husband, she should have certain lands assigned her for her marriage-portion; and this their Majesties also promised should be arranged.

Marguerite was anxious to set out early in the following January, as the approaching departure of Anjou for Flanders made her more desirous than ever of quitting the Court. But, "in spite of her daily solicitations," the King's promises were only fulfilled "in Court fashion," and she was compelled to possess her soul in patience for several months.

The same dilatory methods were employed in regard to Anjou. It was in vain that he represented to the King the advantages of his Flemish enterprise; that it was for the honour and aggrandisement of France; that it was a sure means of preventing a renewal of the civil war, "since all such unquiet spirits as were desirous of change would have an opportunity of going to Flanders, to let off their steam and quench their thirst for war," whilst the expedition would provide the French nobility with as valuable a military experience as they had formerly found in Piedmont. Henri III. had no mind to lend

himself to the aggrandisement of his brother, whom he cordially hated, and though he did not formally forbid the expedition, he threw every possible obstacle in its way.

The sword of Viteaux had cut short the ascendency of Du Guast; but Maugiron,[1] his successor in the King's favour, was no less presumptuous, insolent, and quarrelsome, and did everything possible to incite Henri against those whom he feared might be inclined to dispute his influence. This Maugiron had formerly been in Anjou's service, which he had deserted for that of the King, and hated his old master with all the bitterness of a renegade. In alliance with his fellow *mignons*, Quélus, Gramont, Saint-Mesgrin, Livarot, Saint-Luc, and the rest, and with the tacit approval of the King, he persecuted the duke and his followers with the utmost rancour, and "subjected them to a thousand insults." Bussy, as *Monsieur's* chief champion, was perpetually having quarrels thrust upon him, and would appear to have spent the greater part of his time in giving and receiving challenges to mortal combat. It must, however, be admitted that the valiant Bussy was only too ready to measure swords with the royal *mignons*, and, by the contempt which he openly manifested for them, did not a little towards provoking breaches of the peace.

"On Tuesday, January 10," writes L'Estoile, "Bussy, who, on the preceding Tuesday, had quarrelled with the Seigneur de Gramont, sent to the Porte Saint-Antoine three hundred gentlemen well-armed and mounted, and the Seigneur de Gramont as many friends and partisans of the King, to fight there and decide their quarrel

[1] Louis de Maugiron, son of Laurent de Maugiron, Baron d'Ampuis, Lieutenant-General of Dauphiné.

à-toute-outrance. . . .But they were prevented from fighting that morning, by order of the King; notwithstanding which, in the afternoon, Gramont, who declared himself insulted, went, with a considerable following, to seek Bussy at his lodging, which was in the Rue des Prouvaires, into which he forced an entrance, and, for some time, a combat was waged between those within and those without. His Majesty, having been advised of this, despatched thither the Maréchal de Cossé and Captain Strozzi, Colonel-General of the French infantry, with their guards, who conducted Bussy to the Louvre, to which, soon afterwards, the Seigneur de Gramont was also brought, and where they were retained each in a separate room. Next morning, they were reconciled, by the advice of the Maréchaux de Montmorency and de Cossé, in whose charge the King had placed them, instead of being brought to trial, which would have been the proper course to take, if justice had reigned in France and at the Court."

The chronicler goes on to tell us that, the same day, his Majesty profited by the occasion to deliver to the courtiers assembled at his *lever*, "a fine and grave remonstrance, touching the quarrels which daily took place amongst them, even in his palace and near his person (a capital offence, according to the laws of the realm), for the most trifling reasons, and even for nothing at all, and announced that, to obviate this scandal, he had promulgated certain Ordinances, which dealt very stringently with such brawlers."

The Ordinances, however, seemed to have troubled the *mignons* very little; for, soon afterwards, we hear of another affray, near the Porte Saint-Honoré, in which Quélus and several of his friends attacked Bussy, who was

on horseback and accompanied only by one gentleman. According to L'Estoile, blows were exchanged, and Bussy's companion severely wounded; but Brantôme states that Bussy did not stop to meet his antagonists, but galloped off and "wrote a very fine letter to the King." Anyway, he demanded permission to fight a formal duel with Quélus; but this favour was refused him, and, though the Council decided that Quélus, "as the aggressor, should be made prisoner and brought to trial," no steps were taken against him.

"My brother," writes Marguerite, "being of opinion that these incidents were not calculated to accelerate his expedition to Flanders, and being desirous of mollifying the King rather than of irritating him, and reflecting also that, if Bussy were away from Court, he might the better advance the training of the troops he required, despatched him to his estates. But Bussy's departure did not put an end to the persecution, and it was evident that, although his fine qualities had inspired Maugiron and the other young men with a good deal of jealousy, the principal cause of their hatred of him arose from the fact that he was in my brother's service. For, after he had gone, they continued to defy and annoy him (Anjou) with so much insolence, and so openly, that every one perceived it."

Marguerite assures us that, for a time, Anjou bore these attacks with exemplary patience, "being resolved to submit to anything, if thereby he could promote his Flemish enterprise; but, at length, matters reached a climax. On February 9, 1578, the King's favourite, Saint-Luc, was married with great *éclat* to Jeanne de Cossé-Brissac, daughter of the Maréchal de Cossé, "ugly, hump-backed and crooked," and still worse,

according to L'Estoile. But *Monsieur* and the Queen of Navarre decided not to attend the ceremony, and went with the Queen-Mother to dine at Saint-Maur. However, in the evening, the duke consented to appear at the ball wherewith the day's festivities concluded, Catherine having represented to him that his absence would be certain to displease the King. But no sooner did he enter the ball-room, than the *mignons* who evidently regarded his refusal to grace the wedding-ceremony with his presence as a personal affront to their comrade and themselves, " began taunting him with such cutting words that any one, even of lesser degree than himself, would have been offended at them, telling him that he might have spared himself the trouble of changing his dress, and twitting him with his ugliness and meanness of stature." [1]

Boiling with indignation, Anjou retired, and, after taking counsel with his confidant, the Marquis de la Châtre, decided to go into the country for a few days' hunting, " believing that his absence would diminish the animosity of these youths against him, and thus facilitate his business with the King, relative to the Flemish enterprise." He then went to find the Queen-Mother, and informed her of what had occurred at the ball, and of the resolution at which he had arrived.

Catherine expressed herself much annoyed at the treatment to which the prince had been subjected, approved of his decision to leave the Court for a time, and promised to obtain leave of absence for him from the King, adding that, while he was away, she would do everything in her power to further his expedition to Flanders. She then sent Villequier[2] to Henri III. to obtain the required

[1] *Memoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

[2] René de Villequier, Baron de Clairvaux, one of the worst of Henri III.'s unworthy favourites. During the preceding year, while the

FRANÇOIS DE VALOIS, DUC D'ALENÇON

(AFTERWARDS DUC D'ANJOU)

From an Engraving after a Drawing attributed to FRANÇOIS CLOUET, *in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris*

permission, and Anjou, looking upon his *congé* as already granted, returned to his apartments, and having given orders to his servants to make the necessary preparations for his departure on the morrow, went to bed, little imagining the storm which was brewing.

Villequier, meanwhile, had gone to the King with the Queen-Mother's message. Henri III., at first, raised no objection, but, having retired to his cabinet, "with a Jeroboam's council of some five or six young men," he was induced to believe that *Monsieur's* desire to withdraw for a time from Court was highly suspicious, and that it would be advisable to have him arrested immediately. Throwing on a dressing-gown, and summoning the Sieur de Losse, Captain of his Scottish Guard, and some archers to accompany him, the King hurried to Catherine's apartments, "in a state of the utmost agitation, as though there were some public panic, or the enemy had been at the gate, exclaiming: 'How, Madame, could you think of asking me to sanction my brother's departure? Do you not perceive, were he to go, the peril to which you expose my realm? Doubtless, this pretext of hunting is but the cover for some dangerous design. I am going to arrest him and all his people, and I shall cause his coffers to be searched. I feel that we shall make some discovery of importance.'"

Catherine, fearing that, in his state of frenzied excitement, the King might really attempt some act of violence against his brother, declared her intention of accompanying him, and "wrapping herself, as best she could, in her *manteau de nuit*," followed him to Anjou's

Court was at Poitiers, he had murdered his wife in a fit of jealousy; but, as the King bore the unfortunate lady a grudge, the crime remained unpunished and the murderer still in favour.

apartments, at the door of which his Majesty began knocking violently, crying out that it was the King who stood without, and demanding instant admission.

"My brother," writes Marguerite, "woke up with a start, and knowing that he had done nothing which need give him cause for alarm, told Cangé, his *valet-de-chambre*, to open the door. The King, entering in his fury, began upbraiding him, declaring that he would never cease plotting against his realm, and that he would teach him what it meant to conspire against his King. Thereupon, he ordered the archers to carry off his coffers, and to drag his lackeys out of the room. He himself searched my brother's bed, to see if he could discover any papers there. My brother, having a letter from Madame de Sauve, which he had received that very evening, held it in his hand to prevent it being seen. The King insisted on taking it from him. My brother resisted and implored him, with clasped hands, not to look at it, which made the King all the more anxious to get possession of it, believing that it would be quite sufficient to bring my brother to trial. At last, the King having opened it, in the presence of the Queen my mother, they were as much embarrassed as was Cato, who, having compelled Caesar, in the Senate, to show the paper which had been brought to him, and which, he declared, was something affecting the welfare of the Republic, it proved to be a love-letter, which Cato's own sister had addressed to him. The shame of this misapprehension increased rather than abated the King's wrath, and, refusing to listen to my brother, who kept on demanding of what he was accused and why he was being treated thus, he committed him to the keeping of M. de Losse and the Scots, ordering them not to allow him to speak to any one."

When his infuriated brother and Catherine had taken their departure, *Monsieur* inquired of Losse, "whose eyes were filled with tears at seeing matters brought to such a pass," what had happened to the Queen of Navarre, and, on being assured that she was still at liberty, expressed himself greatly relieved, and sent Losse to beg the Queen-Mother to obtain the King's permission for his sister to share his captivity. This was granted, and the princess, informed by one of the Scots of what had occurred, hastily dressed and repaired to Anjou's apartments. Although it was scarcely yet day, news of *Monsieur's* arrest had already spread, and the courtyard of the Louvre was thronged with people, "who," says Marguerite, "were generally eager to see me and do me honour, but now, perceiving that Fortune had turned her face from me, like the courtiers that they were, pretended not to see me."

Anjou seems to have been in great fear, "lest his enemies, unable to compass his death, should cause him to languish in the solitude of a long captivity." But, in the course of the next day, the elder members of the Council, "who were all extremely scandalised at the bad advice that the King had received," addressed a vigorous remonstrance to his Majesty, who, having by this time recovered his senses, took it in good part, and begged the Queen-Mother to smooth over matters, and "arrange that my brother should forget all that had occurred." Catherine, accordingly, proceeded to *Monsieur's* apartments and "told him that he ought to praise God for the mercy he had shown him in delivering him from so great a peril, since there had been moments when she had scarcely dared to hope for his life;" and entreated him to do everything in his power

to convince the King of his loyalty and his zeal for his service. The prince was then set at liberty, and a formal reconciliation took place between the brothers, in the King's cabinet and in the presence of the principal personages of the Court; after which, Bussy, who had returned to the Louvre to visit his master the previous evening, and had been promptly arrested, was sent for, together with Quélus, and the two enemies ordered to embrace one another, "in order that no bone of contention should remain to occasion further quarrels."

But the wound—to borrow Marguerite's expression—was only fomented externally and not really healed; and the *mignons* had little difficulty in persuading the King that his brother would never forget the indignity to which he had been subjected, and would be certain to seek to avenge it. This idea so obsessed the suspicious monarch, that, though he did not venture to have *Monsieur* rearrested, he caused him to be kept under the closest surveillance, forbade him to leave the Louvre, and gave orders that all his attendants should be turned out of the palace every night, with the exception of those who usually slept in his bedchamber or in his closet.

Exasperated beyond endurance by these renewed mortifications, Anjou resolved to effect his escape and withdraw to his estates, until the preparations for his Flemish expedition were completed. He communicated his intention to his devoted ally Marguerite, who, "seeing that therein lay his only hope of safety, and that neither the King nor the realm would suffer any prejudice in consequence," readily promised him her aid.

The project, however, presented serious difficulties. To endeavour to escape by day was out of the question,

for the gates were carefully guarded, and *Monsieur* was surrounded by spies; while by night, the Louvre, with its draw-bridges and its moats, was a feudal fortress, which it was as difficult to leave as to enter. But Marguerite's ingenuity was equal to the occasion. Her apartments were situated in close proximity to those of her brother, and, as Anjou was permitted to move freely about the interior of the palace, and to visit his sister whenever he pleased, it was decided that he should escape by the window of the Queen's bedchamber, which was in the North-East quarter of the Louvre, on the second storey, overlooking the moat.

But for this a long and stout rope was required, an article which could not be procured in the palace without suspicion being aroused. Marguerite, thereupon, despatched a page, upon whose discretion and fidelity she could rely, into the town, with a lute-box which required mending. When he returned, a few hours later, a rope had been substituted for the instrument.

February 14, the day decided on for the duke's escape, was a fast-day, the first Friday in Lent, and, as the King did not sup *au grand couvert*, Marguerite supped with the Queen-Mother in the latter's apartments As they were on the point of rising from table, Anjou entered, and, impatient to regain his freedom, whispered to his sister to return as soon as possible to her apartments, where he would be awaiting her. Matignon, "a dangerous and cunning Norman,"[1] who happened to be present, and had either got wind of what was intended, or else suspected it from the manner in which *Monsieur* had spoken to the princess, stopped the Queen-Mother, as she was leaving the room, and told her that "it was

[1] Odet de Matignon, Comte de Thorigny, see pp. 133 and 140 *supra*.

evident that my brother intended to make off; that by the morrow he would be gone, and that she ought to prevent it."

Catherine, obviously much disturbed by Matignon's words, told her daughter to follow her into her bedchamber, and, turning to her, said: "Are you aware of what Matignon told me?" Marguerite replied that she had not heard what was said, but had perceived that it was something which had pained her mother. "Yes," rejoined Catherine, "it pained me very much, for you know that I have pledged my word to the King that your brother should not depart, and Matignon told me that he is well aware that he will not be here to-morrow."

Marguerite tells us that she "found herself in a double dilemma, since she would either have to break faith with her brother and place his life in jeopardy, or swear against the truth (a thing which she would not have done to escape a thousand deaths)." Eventually, she took refuge in a subterfuge, which completely satisfied her somewhat elastic conscience, and which she appears to have regarded as a direct inspiration of the Almighty, although it is rather doubtful whether any of her readers will agree with her on this point. "I composed my countenance and my speech," she continues, "in such wise that she [the Queen-Mother] could ascertain nothing but what I chose, whilst, at the same time, I neither offended my soul nor my conscience by the taking of any false oath. I then inquired of her whether she were not aware of the hatred which M. de Matignon bore my brother, and said that he was a malicious mischief-maker, who was annoyed at seeing us all agreed; that, if my brother should depart, I would forfeit my life;

and that, since he had never concealed anything from me, he would have informed me, if he had any such design. This I said, being well assured that, once my brother was in safety, no one would dare to injure me, while, if the worst happened, I infinitely preferred to pledge my life than to offend my soul by taking a false oath."

Catherine, without seeking to probe the meaning of her daughter's words, said to her : " Consider what you are saying ; you will be my surety for it ; and will answer to me for it with your life."

The princess smilingly assured her that that was what she meant, and, bidding her good-night, repaired to her own apartments, where she hurriedly undressed and got into bed, in order to be able to dismiss her ladies and maids-of-honour, none of whom she had admitted to her confidence. As soon as she found herself alone, save for three waiting-women, whom she could implicitly trust, and the page who had brought the rope, Anjou entered, accompanied by his confidant, Simier, who had aided him in his previous escape, in 1575, and his faithful *valet-de-chambre*, Cangé.

Then began this adventure, which recalls to mind the escape of the Duc de Beaufort, the famous " *Roi des Halles*," from Vincennes, seventy years later. " Nothing," remarks M. de Saint-Poncy, " depicts more vividly the disorder of this Court than this strange, nocturnal escape, which takes place at the Louvre itself, within two paces of the King. What a characteristic tableau ! It is the first Prince of the Blood, heir-presumptive to the throne, who escapes through a window, at the risk of breaking his neck, or of being arrested as a malefactor ; it is a Daughter of France, Queen of

Navarre, who furnishes him with the means for this flight, superintends this liberation in her own chamber, procures the instruments for it, and adjusts them with her own fair and royal hands!" [1]

But let us allow Marguerite to give her own account of the adventure.

"I then rose; we adjusted the rope by means of a stick, and, after we had looked into the moat, to see if there was any one there, with the assistance only of three of my women, who slept in my room, and of the boy who had brought the rope, we let down, first, my brother, who laughed and jested without being in the least afraid, although the height was very great; next, Simier, who, pale and trembling, could scarcely hold on through fear, and then Cangé, my brother's *valet-de-chambre*. God directed my brother so happily, that, without being discovered, he reached Sainte-Geneviève, where Bussy was awaiting him, who, with the consent of the abbé,[2] had made a hole in the town wall.[3] Through this he passed, and finding horses in readiness, gained Angers without any mishap.

"Just as we were letting down Cangé, who was the last to descend, a man rose up from the bottom of the moat, and set off running towards the apartment which adjoins the tennis-court, which is the way leading to the guard-room. I, who, in the midst of all this danger, had never apprehended anything which concerned myself, but only the safety or peril of my brother, was

[1] *Marguerite de Valois, Reine de France et de Navarre*, i. 527.

[2] Joseph Foulon. He took a very active part, on behalf of the League, at the time of the siege of Paris. At this time, he was devoted to *Monsieur's* interests.

[3] The Abbey of Sainte-Geneviève, situated on the south side of the Seine, was built against the city walls.

half-senseless with fear, supposing that this was some one who, in accordance with M. de Matignon's warning, had been placed there to watch us."

The waiting-women were as terrified as their mistress, and, seizing the tell-tale rope, threw it into the fire. This rope, however, which happened to be a very long one, made such a blaze that the chimney caught fire, and the archers of the guard came knocking at the door, telling Marguerite's women to let them in, in order to extinguish the flames. The women, however, induced them to go away, saying that their mistress was asleep, and assuring them that they were quite able to put out the fire without their help. This they succeeded in doing; but, two hours later, Losse, the Captain of the Scottish Guard, arrived to conduct Marguerite to the King and Queen-Mother. Their Majesties, it appeared, had already been informed of *Monsieur's* escape by the Abbé of Sainte-Geneviève, who, in order not to become compromised in the affair, had, with Anjou's consent, carried the news to the Louvre, so soon as he judged the duke to be beyond reach of pursuit, declaring that *Monsieur* had arrived at the abbey unexpectedly, and had caused him to be detained as a prisoner, while his followers made a hole through the wall.

The King was, of course, in a towering passion, and both he and Catherine accused Marguerite of having deceived them, and connived at her brother's escape. The princess protested her innocence, declared that Anjou had deceived her, as he had them, and announced her willingness to answer to them with her life that his departure would not result in any deviation from his allegiance, and that he was only going to his estates to conclude his preparations for his expedition to Flanders.

Henri III., although well aware that he had been tricked, pretended to believe his sister, not daring, as Marguerite had foreseen, to complicate matters by taking any steps against her, now that Anjou was at large again; and the princess returned to her apartments very well satisfied with her night's work.

Next day, Catherine started for Angers to endeavour to induce the fugitive to return; but this time the great negotiator did not meet with any success; and all she brought back with her was a letter from *Monsieur* to the King, in which the duke informed his brother that his desire to be at liberty and the ill-treatment he had received at Court had been the only reasons which had determined him to retire to his government, and that he had no intention of disturbing the kingdom.

With which assurance his Majesty was fain to be content.

CHAPTER XVII

Catherine decides to accompany her daughter to Gascony to rejoin the King of Navarre—Marguerite receives her dowry in lands—Efforts of Henri III. to conciliate his sister—Departure of the Queen-Mother and the Queen of Navarre for the South—Their suite—Marguerite's entry into Bordeaux—Meeting with Henri of Navarre at Castéras—"A little war of ogling"—Marguerite's reception at Agen, Toulouse, and Auch—Incident of La Réole and Fleurance—The Queen of Navarre enters Nérac, where politics are temporarily superseded by love—Influence exercised by Marguerite at the Treaty of Nérac—Catherine returns to Paris.

The flight of *Monsieur* deprived Marguerite of her chief support at the Court; but, on the other hand, removed a subject of continual anxiety to her; for, in point of fact, she had given far more assistance to her brother than she had received from the duke, who was naturally inconstant, restless, and feeble, and "perpetually playing the fool," to borrow Catherine's expression.

Nevertheless, after his departure, she was more than ever anxious to quit the Court, and "continued to importune the King at all hours to allow her to rejoin her husband." This request Henri III. was no longer in a position to refuse, as he was just then particularly desirous not to irritate the King of Navarre, who was making strong representations to the Government in regard to the grievances of the Protestants, and was not less importunate in protesting against the sequestra-

tion of his estates in the North and centre of France. It was, therefore, arranged that Marguerite should start for Gascony, so soon as the Queen-Mother—who, ostensibly to settle her son-in-law's claims and the points still in dispute, but really in order to endeavour to sow dissension between the King of Navarre and his most influential followers, had decided to accompany her daughter—could leave Paris.

In the meantime, the King, "not wishing her to depart bearing him ill-will, and likewise, desiring, above all things, to divert her from her affection for her brother, endeavoured to conciliate her by every kind of benefit . . . and took the trouble to visit her every morning, and to point out how advantageous his friendship was to her, whilst that of her brother would, in the end, bring about her destruction, with a thousand other arguments to the same effect."

Marguerite was not to be persuaded to renounce her allegiance to Anjou, but she took advantage of this sudden change in his Majesty's disposition towards her to exact the fulfilment of the promise made her at the time of the "Peace of *Monsieur*," and renewed on her return from Flanders, to assign her her dower in lands; and received the *sénéchaussées* of Quercy and the Agenais, the more important to her, inasmuch as they adjoined her husband's dominions, the royal domains of Condomois, Auvergne, and Rouergue, and the lordships of Rieux, Alby, and Verdun-sur-Garonne. This rich appanage, which was conceded by letters patent dated March 18, 1578, made the young Queen of Navarre one of the wealthiest and most powerful landowners in France.

Before setting out for Guienne, Marguerite accompanied her mother to Alençon to bid farewell to *Monsieur*,

who was on the point of starting for Flanders. Then they returned to the capital to complete their preparations for their own journey, the expenses of which, L'Estoile tells us, were borne by the clergy, upon whom the King levied a "tenth," at which, adds the chronicler, "they all murmured loudly."[1] At the end of July, the King escorted his relatives as far as Olinville, one of his favourite country-seats, where they remained for a few days, and, on August 2, bade his Majesty adieu, and took the road to the south.

The two Queens travelled in full state, and Marguerite's suite alone numbered close upon three hundred persons;[2] there were ladies-of-honour and maids-of-honour, councillors and secretaries; confessors and chaplains; physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries; equerries and *valets-de-chambre*, pages, waiting-women, and lackeys; musicians and *maréchaux-des-logis;* cooks, scullions, and laundresses; coachmen, grooms, postillions, and muleteers, so that it is small wonder that his Majesty preferred to burden the clergy, rather than himself, with the expenses of the journey. Among the distinguished persons who accompanied them, and whose attendants helped to swell the cortège to the size of a veritable army, were the Cardinal de Bourbon, the Duc de Montpensier, and his son, the Dauphin of Auvergne, the Prince de Conti, Matignon, Brantôme, and the learned Pibrac,[3] of whom we shall have something to say hereafter. The "*escadron volant*,"

[1] *Journal de Henri III.*, July 1578.

[2] M. Philippe Lauzun, *Itinéraire raisonné de Marguerite de Valois en Gascogne, d'après ses livres des comptes.*

[3] Gui du Faur, Sieur de Pibrac. He had gained a considerable reputation as an orator at the Council of Trent, and had accompanied Henri III. to Poland. On his return to France, he was made Président of the Parlement of Paris, and had lately been nominated Chancellor

too—significant fact!—was on its war footing. For an advance-guard, Catherine's maids-of-honour, Bazerne and Dayelle, a beautiful young Greek, who had escaped from the sack of Cyprus in 1571, the Italian, Anne d'Atri, who had accompanied Marguerite to Flanders, and Mlle. de Rebours and de Fosseux, maids-of-honour to the Queen of Navarre. And for the rear-guard, the Duchesse de Montpensier, and the Duchesse d'Uzès, of the caustic tongue, whom Catherine called "her gossip," and Marguerite "her sibyl," and, finally, the too-celebrated Madame de Sauve, who, although she was but five-and-twenty, had achieved so many conquests that she must have seemed almost a veteran to the young girls who were on their first campaign.[1]

The royal travellers journeyed by easy stages, and, after having passed through Étampes, and Artenay, and traversed the environs of Orléans, they made a short stay at the Château of Chenonceaux. From there they travelled, by way of Tours, Azay-le-Rideau, Chinon, Fontevrault, Poitiers, Ruffec, and Cognac, into Guienne.

It was Catherine's policy that her daughter should be received *en souveraine* in all the towns of her husband's government, and Marguerite had a magnificent reception at Bordeaux, the capital of the province, into which city she made her entry "with all the magnificence that could be desired, habited in an orange robe, her favourite colour, covered with embroidery, and mounted on a white horse."[2]

of the Queen of Navarre. He was at this time fifty-four years of age.

[1] La Ferrière, *Trois amoureuses au XVI.e siècle : Marguerite de Valois.* D'Aubigné says that Catherine had brought Madame de Sauve and Mlle. Dayelle "expressly for the benefit of her son-in-law."

[2] Brantôme, *Dames illustres.*

After a stay of a few days, the two Queens left Bordeaux, on October 1, and slept the night at Cadillac, and the one following at Saint-Macaire. Here Pibrac, who had been sent on in advance to announce their coming, arrived with the news that the King of Navarre would meet them at Castéras, half-way between Saint-Macaire and La Réole, " a town which was still held by those of the Religion, by reason of the mistrust which yet possessed them—the disturbed condition of the country not having permitted of his coming any further."[1]

The Queen arrived first at the rendezvous, and entered the château to await the King. Henri appeared, an hour later, bravely attended by a suite of six hundred gentlemen, all richly dressed and well mounted. Followed by the Vicomte de Turenne and his chief nobles, he entered the château, saluted Catherine very cordially, kissed his wife on both cheeks, and overwhelmed her with expressions of joy and affection. At La Réole, to which the united Courts proceeded, and where they remained for a few days, Catherine had several interviews with her son-in-law, and it was finally arranged that a special commission should be appointed to enforce the concessions granted to the Protestants at the Peace of Bergerac, and that all the points in dispute between the Huguenots and Catholics should be submitted to a conference.

In the meanwhile, " a little war of ogling " had begun. Madame de Sauve endeavoured to resume her empire over her royal lover, but she already belonged to ancient history. The Béarnais preferred green fruit, and his chief attentions were bestowed on Mlle. Dayelle, the

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard). Le Réole was one of the six surety-towns ceded to the Huguenots by the Peace of Bergerac.

beautiful Cypriote. On her side, Mlle. d'Atri found a malicious pleasure in rendering d'Ussac, the old governor of La Réole, madly enamoured of her. The King of Navarre and his younger nobles bantered the poor governor unmercifully, and the veteran, wounded to the quick, vowed vengeance on his ungrateful chief, and, some months later, deserted to the Royalist side.

At Marmande, the two Courts parted; the King of Navarre setting out for Nérac to make arrangements for the proposed conference, while Marguerite, accompanied by her mother, went to take possession of her appanage. On October 12, she arrived at Agen, and made a magnificent entry into the town, whither all the nobles and gentry of the neighbourhood flocked to do her homage. From Agen, they set out for Toulouse, being met at the Château de Lafox by Henri, who escorted them as far as Valence. Their official entry into Toulouse took place on October 26, when the Queens, who were accompanied by the Maréchaux d'Amville and de Biron, and a number of nobles, were received with great ceremony by the municipality, and conducted beneath triumphal arches and through streets strewn with flowers, to the archbishop's palace, where they lodged.

Soon after their arrival at Toulouse, the Queen of Navarre fell ill, "seized with a violent attack of fever," in consequence of which she was compelled to receive the members of the Parlement, when they came to present her with their address of welcome, "in a great bed of white damask," and was unable to leave the city until November 10. Eager to expedite the meeting of the conference decided upon by her and Henri of Navarre, Catherine had already set out for Isle-Jourdain, the rendezvous arranged between them. While she was

CATHERINE DE MEDICI, QUEEN OF FRANCE

From the Drawing by François Clouet, *in the British Museum*

at Bordeaux, Henri had sent to her, proposing that the conference should be held at Castel-Sarrazin, on the pretext of the lack of suitable accommodation at Isle-Jourdain, but really because he wished to remain in a Huguenot country. The Queen-Mother curtly replied that she should hold him to his agreement; but, though she waited a week at Isle-Jourdain, neither the King nor any Huguenot deputies appeared. In great disgust, she ended by consenting to the conference being held at Nérac, and proceeded to Auch, into which town she made her entry on November 20. Marguerite arrived the following day. On her journey from Toulouse, she had stopped for a night at the Château of Pibrac, belonging to her chancellor, renowned at that time for its sumptuous furniture and decorations, and had been magnificently entertained by its owner. Without as yet daring to avow his feelings, Pibrac, like so many others, had already succumbed to his beautiful mistress's charms; and this growing passion was to be followed by very unfortunate consequences.

The municipal authorities came to receive Marguerite at the Porte de la Trille. The young Queen was in a litter, over which was spread a black velvet pall embroidered with her Arms; trumpets sounded, cannon fired salutes, and the children of the town chanted odes in her praise. Two days later, her husband arrived, and was also received with great ceremony, as the Comte d'Armagnac, and handed the keys of the town.

It was while the King of Navarre and the two Queens were at Auch, that a singular incident occurred. The popular version, which, we observe, is accepted by Mr. P. F. Willert, Henri's latest biographer,[1] is as follows:

[1] "Henry of Navarre and the Huguenots in France," p. 129.

The evening of the King's arrival, while a ball was in progress, a messenger entered to inform him that d'Ussac, the Governor of La Réole, seduced from his allegiance by the fascinating Mlle. d'Atri, and infuriated by the banter of his sovereign, had betrayed the town to the Royalists. Henri's first impulse on learning the news was to retaliate by arresting Biron and the Catholic chiefs who had accompanied the Queen-Mother; but, being advised that the marshal had too strong a following to render this practicable without bloodshed, he slipped from the room, called some of his most trusty followers together, and before morning escaladed Fleurance, a small town between Auch and Lectoure, held by a garrison of French troops. Catherine, when she heard of the exploit only laughed: "It is his revenge for La Réole," said she, "cabbage for cabbage, but mine has the better heart."

The truth, however, would appear to be somewhat less picturesque. D'Ussac, as we have mentioned elsewhere, did certainly desert the Huguenot for the Royalist side, and in the next war held La Réole against his former friends, "to the prejudice of his soul and his honour."[1] But his defection did not take place until some months later. The château and town of La Réole were not betrayed by him to the Royalists, but were seized by the townspeople, who rose in revolt, owing to the tyranny of one of d'Ussac's officers named Favas, "who oppressed and maltreated them." The town was subsequently restored to the King of Navarre by order of Henri III.

As for the supposed *coup de main* at Fleurance, Catherine's correspondence tells us what really occurred there. Fleurance was an Armagnac town, and ought to have

[1] *Mémoires du Duc de Bouillon.*

admitted the King of Navarre, as Auch had done. But when he appeared and demanded the keys, the Catholic inhabitants refused to surrender them, flew to arms, and occupied the towers of one of their gates, from which they fired several arquebus-shots at their ord and his followers, wounding a gentleman of Henri's suite. However, the Queen-Mother sent orders to them to evacuate the tower and admit the King, which they eventually did. [1]

From Auch, the two Queens proceeded to Condom, and, on December 15, Marguerite made her entry into Nérac, the capital of the duchy of Albret, and the residence of her husband's maternal ancestors. Here, the two Courts remained a week, which was devoted to fêtes and amusements of all kinds. The King's troupe of Italian players gave several performances, and Salluste, du Bartas, the Ronsard of the Huguenots,[2] composed, in the Queen's honour, a dialogue in three languages, which was recited by three damsels, representing the Gascon, Latin and French Muses. As was, of course, to be expected, Marguerite awarded the palm to the Gascon Muse, who had proclaimed her husband "*leu plus grand rey deu moun*," and, in token of her satisfaction, presented the young lady—a certain Mlle. Sauvage—with a gauze fichu which she happened to be wearing, and which, M. de Saint-Poncy assures us, was for many years cherished as a precious relic by the descendants of the recipient.

[1] M. Charles Merki, *La Reine Margot et la fin des Valois*, p. 212.

[2] Guillaume Salluste du Bartas. He was born at Montfort, near Auch, in 1544, and became a soldier while still very young. He was entrusted by the King of Navarre with several diplomatic missions to England, Scotland and Denmark, and fell, fighting by his side, at Ivry.

At Nérac, politics were for the moment relegated to the background, and love reigned supreme. The pretty girls whom the two Queens had brought with them, turned the heads of all the Protestant nobles, so much so indeed that Marguerite tells us that there were moments when her mother suspected that the delays in holding the conference had been purposely arranged by these enamoured gentlemen, "to the end that they might the longer enjoy the society of her maids-of-honour." Even the stern Calvinist, d'Aubigné, and the grave statesman, Rosny,[1] caught the prevailing infection; for the former tells us that they were "all lovers together," while Sully admits that he also became a courtier and "took a mistress like the others." It should be mentioned, however, that the Calvinist nobles were, after all, only following the example of their sovereign, who had renewed his old *liaison* with Madame de Sauve, and whose passion for Mlle. Dayelle had reached a very high temperature. "But," writes his complacent consort, "this did not prevent the King my husband from showing me great respect and affection, as much, indeed, as I could have desired; since he informed me, upon the very first day we arrived, of all the devices that had been invented, while he was at Court, to create bad feeling between us, and he expressed great satisfaction at our reunion."

Catherine cut short these intrigues by removing with her squadron to Porte-Sainte-Marie, where she remained until the first week of February 1579, when she returned to Nérac, for the conference. In these deliberations, Marguerite took a prominent part, but in a sense very much opposed to that which Catherine had expected of

[1] Maximilien de Béthune, afterwards Duc de Sully.

her. That veteran intriguer had brought her fairest auxiliaries with her, in the confident expectation that her susceptible son-in-law would succumb to their charms, and thus cause an estrangement between him and his wife, by which she could not fail to profit. But Henri and Marguerite seemed to have agreed upon a policy of mutual tolerance, and the latter, thoroughly well acquainted with the objects and methods of her mother, was able to give her husband some very useful advice, which greatly disconcerted Catherine's plans. She also did not scruple to make use of her influence over Pibrac, and the enamoured lawyer manœuvred so skilfully that the Huguenots obtained more favourable terms than they had dared to hope for. The conference, after some pretty sharp recriminations,[1] ended with a promise of further securities to the Huguenots, in the shape of eight additional surety-towns, and of the complete redress of their grievances; and, towards the end of March, the Queen-Mother set out on her return to Paris, having accomplished very little, save the sowing of a few seeds of discord about the King of Navarre, and the beguiling of two or three Catholic nobles from their allegiance to him.

Marguerite and her husband accompanied Catherine as far as Castelnaudary, where they took leave of her. The parting affected his Majesty not a little; for the Queen-Mother carried away with her the fascinating Mlle. Dayelle.

[1] The Huguenot deputies adopted a very arrogant and bellicose tone, and Catherine felt obliged to address them "royally and very haughtily, even going so far as to declare that she would have them all hanged as rebels." Upon which the Queen of Navarre intervened and, with tears in her eyes, implored her mother to give them peace.

CHAPTER XVIII

Mlle. de Rebours becomes the King of Navarre's mistress—Difficulty of Marguerite's position at Pau, owing to the proscription of the Catholic religion—Incident on Whit-Sunday 1579, in the Queen's private chapel—Marguerite nurses her husband during an illness at Eauze—Life at Nérac—Amours of the King—A disappointed lover's revenge—Henri III. writes to his brother-in-law to warn him of the nature of his wife's relations with the Vicomte de Turenne—Anger of Marguerite, who intrigues to bring about a renewal of hostilities—The "Lovers' War"—The storming of Cahors—The Maréchal de Biron blockades Nérac—Marguerite uses her influence to end the war—Anjou sent to Gascony to negotiate on behalf of the King—The Treaty of Fleix.

"IT is the best *ménage* that one could possibly desire," wrote Catherine to her confidante, the Duchesse d'Uzès, who had preceded her to Paris; and, indeed, for some time after their reunion, harmony appeared to reign between the King of Navarre and his wife. On taking leave of the Queen-Mother, the royal pair spent some time at Mazères and Pamiers; but the end of May found them installed at Pau, in the château in which Henri had been born.

Mlle. Dayelle having followed Catherine to Paris, the King turned for consolation to Mlle. de Rebours,[1] "a malicious girl," says Marguerite, "who disliked me and endeavoured by every means in her power to prejudice me in his eyes." However, it was not on account

[1] Daughter of Guillaume de Rebours, Président of the Parlement.

of this new mistress that the first domestic storm arose but owing to a very different matter.

The position of Marguerite, a Catholic in the midst of a Calvinist community, was a very difficult one; she had, at the same time, to consider the Court of France, on which she depended for her revenues and the interests of her husband. Although the edicts of Jeanne d'Albret, which interdicted on pain of death all exercise of the Catholic religion, had been repealed by Henri, in 1572, after his compulsory abjuration, his Huguenot subjects had refused to obey the Ordinance extorted from their captive sovereign, and, though, since the King's return, the persecution to which the Catholics were subjected was less cruel, it was quite as vexatious as in the time of his mother. "Since there was no exercise of the Catholic religion," writes Marguerite, "I was only permitted to have Mass said in a little chapel four or five paces long, and which, being extremely narrow, was quite full when it contained only seven or eight persons."

At the hour when Mass was to be celebrated, the drawbridge of the château was raised, lest the Catholics of the country should come and hear it. But on Whit-Sunday some Catholic peasants succeeded in entering the château before the drawbridge was raised, and slipped into the little chapel. They remained undetected until the service was nearly over, when, the door being partly opened to admit one of the Queen's suite, some Huguenots, who were peeping in, perceived them and reported the matter to Du Pin, the King's secretary, "who had great influence with his master and great authority in his Household, as he was accustomed to manage all the affairs of those of the Religion."

Du Pin, a bitter Calvinist, hastened to seize the opportunity of teaching this handful of refractory Papists a severe lesson, and, at the same time, of proving to them how powerless was the Queen to afford them protection. He, accordingly, despatched a number of the King's guards to the chapel, who seized the intruders, dragged them forth, and beat them in her Majesty's presence, after which they were thrown into prison, where they remained for some time, in addition to being heavily fined.

Marguerite, greatly incensed at the treatment of her co-religionists, and not less at the slight to her own dignity, lost no time in seeking her husband in order to complain of it, and to beg him to set at liberty these unfortunate people, who, she pointed out, had not deserved such punishment, merely for desiring, after having been so long deprived of the exercise of their own religion, to take advantage of her coming, and to attend Mass on the occasion of so solemn a feast. But, before Henri could reply, Du Pin entered the room, and, "ignoring the respect due to his master, instead of permitting him to answer, took up the conversation himself, telling her not to worry the King her husband about such a matter, since, whatever she might say would not alter the case; that the Catholics had been deservedly punished, and that she should rest satisfied with being permitted to have a Mass said for herself and such of her people as she wished to attend it."

"The King my husband," continues the princess, "perceiving my just indignation, ordered him to leave my presence, and assured me that he was very much annoyed by Du Pin's indiscretion, and that it was his religious zeal which had carried him away; while, with

regard to the Catholic prisoners, he would consult with his councillors in the Parlement of Pau, as to what could be done to satisfy me."

The matter eventually ended in the triumph of Marguerite and the dismissal of Du Pin; but the King was at no pains to conceal from his consort that he parted from him with the greatest reluctance, and treated her for some time very coldly. Nor was it long before he found an excuse for restoring his presumptuous secretary to his former office.

At the end of June, the Court, to Marguerite's great satisfaction, quitted "this little Geneva of a Pau" for Montauban, where a Huguenot assembly was about to meet to discuss the future policy of the party. "On the way thither," writes the Queen, "we had to pass through a little village called Eauze,[1] where, upon the night of our arrival, the King my husband fell ill of a severe and continuous fever, accompanied by a violent headache, which lasted seventeen days, during which time he could obtain repose neither by day nor by night, and it was necessary to change him continually from one bed to another. I devoted myself so entirely to succouring him—never quitting him for a moment or even removing my clothes—that he began to find my service agreeable, and to praise it to every one, particularly to my cousin, M. de Turenne,[2] who, acting the part of a kind kinsman, re-established me as firmly as ever in my husband's good graces. According to Mongez, one ought

[1] A very ancient town, now in the department of the Gers.

[2] Henri de la Tour d'Auvergne, afterwards Duc de Bouillon. His family had made several alliances with the House of Bourbon, on the one side; while, on the other, Catherine de Medici was a daughter of Madeline de la Tour, Comtesse de Boulogne.

to attribute to this temporary reconciliation the indifference and the little credit which the King of Navarre appeared to attach to the scandalous reports which soon afterwards began to circulate about the conduct of his wife and the viscount.

After a short stay at Montauban, the little Court proceeded to Nérac and resumed the life of fêtes and amusements which had marked its former sojourn there. Marguerite appears to have been very happy at Nérac, where far more latitude was permitted her in religious matters than had been the case at Pau, which town she cordially detested. In both places the Protestants were, of course, largely in the majority; but men differ according to their surroundings. At Pau, it was the bigoted Calvinistic ministers who were in the ascendency. At Nérac, the military nobility prevailed, and Marguerite, d'Aubigné tells us, had quickly taught all these young Huguenots "*a dérouiller leurs coeurs et à laisser rouiller leurs armes.*" "Our Court," she writes, "was so brilliant that we had no cause to regret that of France. Besides myself, with a number of ladies- and maids-of-honour, there were the Princesse de Navarre,[1] since married to the Duc de Bar, and the King my husband, with a goodly following of nobles and gentlemen—as gallant a company as ever I remember to have seen at the French Court—the only drawback being that its members were Huguenot. The difference of religion, however, was never alluded to. The King my husband, and the princess his sister, went off in one direction to the *prêche*, while I and my suite would proceed in another to hear Mass, in a chapel situated in the park, after which it was our custom to reassemble and walk together, either in a beautiful

[1] Henri's sister, Catherine de Bourbon.

garden with long alleys planted with laurel and cypress, or in a park, which I had laid out in avenues, three thousand paces long, by the side of the river. And the rest of the day was passed in all kinds of innocent diversions, there being, as a rule, dancing both after dinner and in the evening."

When the Court quitted Pau, Mlle. de Rebours had been left behind ill, and by the time she was sufficiently recovered to rejoin it, her place in the King's affections had been usurped by another of his wife's maids-of-honour, Mlle. de Fosseux, or "Fosseuse," as the Queen had named her.[1] Fosseuse, a damsel of some fifteen summers, "conducted herself with virtue and propriety," and, for some time, the affair remained in its preliminary stages. At the same time that he flirted with this *ingénue*, the Béarnais, who had not the smallest objection to carrying on two or three intrigues at once, cast a favourable eye upon a soubrette in his wife's service called Xaintes, "*avec laquelle il familiarisait.*" Under which circumstances, it is scarcely surprising that his Majesty should have felt obliged to close his eyes to the very marked attentions which Marguerite was receiving from the Vicomte de Turenne, and that it should have required a communication from his royal brother-in-law to open them.

Shortly before this thunder-cloud made its appearance in the smiling sky of Nérac, Marguerite's chancellor, Pibrac, had returned to Paris, summoned thither by his judicial duties in the Parlement, and carrying with him a heart ulcerated by an unrequited love. Although

[1] Françoise de Montmorency, fifth daughter of Pierre de Montmorency, Marquis de Thury, Baron de Fosseux. She married François de Broc, Baron de Cinq-Mars.

some distance on the shady side of fifty, M. de Pibrac had, as we have mentioned, very quickly succumbed to his beautiful mistress's charms. Whether he had dared to avow the passion which possessed him is somewhat doubtful—judging from a letter which we shall presently have occasion to cite, it would appear that he had not[1]—but, any way, he had sighed in vain, and was consumed by a most violent jealousy of his successful rival Turenne.

On his return to the capital, Pibrac was admitted to an audience of the King, who, with fraternal solicitude, questioned him closely as to how it fared with his dear sister at the Court of Navarre, and soon learned from this disappointed lover that which caused him to rub his hands with gratified malice. Pibrac dismissed, his Majesty repaired to his cabinet, and there, with his sneering *mignons* about him, indited to his brother-in-law a letter, wherein he informed him that he felt it to be his most painful duty to warn him of the rumours which were current concerning the relations existing between his consort and his friend, the Vicomte de Turenne, adding that it was the talk of the whole country, and that it behoved the King of Navarre, if he valued his honour, to put a stop to such a scandal without a moment's delay.

His Majesty chuckled gleefully, as he affixed his seal to the letter, reflecting that it was a *coup* worthy of a student of Machiavelli. At one stroke, he would injure Marguerite, whom he hated, put an end to the good understanding between her and her husband, always a menace to his own interests, and deprive the King of Navarre of one of his most trusted and influential followers.

[1] See page 272 *infra.*

And then, that nothing might be wanting to his content, he entrusted this ill-omened epistle to Strozzi, who was about to set out for Nérac, to claim the restoration of the surety-towns from the Huguenots, and, on his own account, to demand the hand of Turenne's sister in marriage. The King disapproved of the Italian soldier's matrimonial aspirations, thinking the heiress in question a suitable match for one of his *mignons*, and judged that poor Strozzi's suit was not likely to be very favourably received by the lady's brother, when he inaugurated his wooing in such fashion. Needless to say, Strozzi was left in happy ignorance of the contents of the missive with which he was charged.

But the *coup* failed, and, moreover, as such machinations not infrequently do, recoiled on the head of him who had contrived it. The King of Navarre, who knew his brother-in-law, divined the snare, and avoided it with his accustomed dexterity. Whether he believed the charge matters little; he had too much to be forgiven not to forgive his wife, and certainly could not afford to quarrel with Turenne. Laughing with well-assumed incredulity, he laid the letter before the delinquents, who expressed their opinion of the King of France's conduct in no measured terms. Marguerite was mortally offended. Besides, she had a new grievance against his Most Christian Majesty, who had lately delivered the fascinating Bussy to the vengeance of Montsoreau.[1] She vowed to make her malicious brother

[1] Bussy, having seduced the Comtesse de Montsoreau, had had the bad taste to boast of his conquest and wrote to Anjou that "he had cast his nets over the hind of the Grand Huntsman (the Comte de Montsoreau had lately been appointed to that post), and held her fast in his toils." *Monsieur*, to amuse the King, with whom he was now reconciled, showed him the letter. Henri III., who hated Bussy, perceived a

pay dearly for all the outrages she had suffered at his hands, and could find no better way than to fan the still smouldering embers of the late war into a fresh blaze. To this task, she devoted herself with characteristic energy and ingenuity. Henri III., who believed that all the troubles had been appeased by the treaty signed at Nérac, "appeared to have no uneasiness in regard to Guienne, and jested with his *mignons* about the King his brother-in-law, whom he spoke of with the utmost contempt." The Duc de Guise also permitted himself to let fall some biting gibes at the expense of his Majesty of Navarre, incited thereto by Madame de Sauve, now his mistress, who had not forgiven Henri for preferring the fresher charms of Mlle. Dayelle to hers. Informed of these railleries, by letters from her friends in Paris, Marguerite employed Fosseuse to repeat them to the King and incite his wrath, and she also induced Xaintes to bestir herself with the same object.

Following the example of her mother, the Queen of Navarre had surrounded herself with ladies remarkable for their beauty, but whose tastes for gallantry involved her in many troubles, and, like Catherine, made use of them when occasion arose, and caused them to espouse her quarrels. Several of these ladies were beloved by the King's councillors, and at the instance of their mistress employed all their powers of persuasion to

fine opportunity for revenge. He kept the letter and handed it to the injured husband, who forced his wife to give her lover a rendezvous at the Château of Coutancère, in Anjou, and when the unsuspecting gallant appeared, fell upon him with a band of bravos. Bussy fought with his usual courage, and, after his sword was broken, defended himself "with tables, benches, chairs, and stools." But, though he killed and wounded several of his assailants, the odds against him were too great, and he was eventually overpowered and slain (August 19, 1579).

induce their admirers to urge upon Henri a renewal of hostilities. And to such good purpose did they carry out her orders that the war which shortly afterwards broke out was called the "Lovers' War," "a name," observes Mongez, "which was the more appropriate, since none of those who composed the Council of the King of Navarre, with the single exception of Favas, whom age had cured of the follies of love, was exempt from this passion." [1]

It is, however, probable that Marguerite's intrigues did little more than precipitate matters, since recourse to arms had been virtually resolved upon at the Huguenot conference which met at Montauban in July 1579, while the Catholics of the South were equally eager for war.

The chief event of the desultory campaign which followed was the storming of Cahors, which afforded Henri of Navarre an opportunity for the display of that obstinate courage, which made so great an impression upon the imagination of his countrymen, and earned him the admiration and respect even of his enemies.

Cahors was the capital of the district of Quercy, which formed part of Marguerite's appanage, but which her husband had never been able to obtain possession of. It was an exceedingly difficult place to take by assault, being built on a rock surrounded on three sides by a bend of the River Lot, and garrisoned by nearly two thousand men, under Jean de Vézins, Seneschal of Quercy. Undaunted by the difficulties of such an undertaking, in the night of May 5-6, 1580, the King of Navarre, with some three thousand men, approached the town, and, favoured by a violent storm, contrived

[1] *Histoire de Marguerite de Valois.*

to get close to the walls without being observed. Two of the gates were quickly blown in by petards, and the Huguenots rushed into the town. They met, however, with a furious resistance, for the townspeople, nearly all fanatical Catholics,who had persecuted their Protestant fellow-citizens with relentless cruelty, rallied to the assistance of the garrison, and, in full belief that no quarter was to be expected from their enemies, fought with all the courage of despair. The steep and narrow streets of the town were all in favour of the defenders, and the assailants fell in scores beneath the fire of the garrison and the missiles which rained upon them from every housetop. Henri's followers urged him to abandon the unequal contest and retire before reinforcements could arrive for the garrison. But the King replied that "the only retreat should be that of his soul from his body," and insisted on continuing the fight. For four days and nights the combat raged without intermission, until, at length, Vézins, having been mortally wounded and the greater part of the garrison having fallen, Cahors surrendered.

But this brilliant feat of arms could not atone for the King of Navarre's lack of resources, as the more sober Protestants disapproved of a war so lightly undertaken, and La Rochelle and several other towns had refused to send assistance. Henri III., furious at the fall of Cahors, took energetic measures, and despatched three armies against the Huguenots. That which operated in Guienne under the command of Biron, the King's lieutenant in that province, was alone much superior in numbers to any which Henri of Navarre could place in the field, and, after taking Mont-de-Marsan and several other towns, appeared before Nérac.

At Marguerite's request, it had been arranged at the commencement of hostilities, that Nérac should be considered neutral ground, unless the King of Navarre should himself be there, in which case the neutrality was to lapse, and the royal forces to be at liberty to attack it. Unfortunately, almost at the same moment as Biron's troops showed themselves on some rising ground near the town, Henri, anxious to spend a few days in the company of his beloved Fosseuse, returned to Nérac, and the marshal, therefore, felt himself justified in commencing offensive operations. The royal forces blockaded the town for two or three days, and, at one time, might have taken it, had they acted with a little more vigour, as the King, deceived by some false information, had withdrawn nearly all his troops to oppose the advance of some reinforcements for Biron, which, as a matter of fact, had already effected their junction with the besiegers.

Finally, the marshal "caused five or six volleys of cannon-shot to be fired into the town," and marched away, having previously despatched a trumpeter to the Queen, "to present his excuses and assure her that, had she been alone in the town, nothing would have induced him to act as he had done." To which her indignant Majesty returned answer that "he might perfectly well have allowed her to enjoy the pleasure of seeing the King her husband for those three days at Nérac; that he could not attack him, when in her presence, without attacking her also, and that she was extremely offended at his conduct, and should complain of it to the King her brother."

After the blockade of Nérac, Marguerite appears to have come to the conclusion that it was high time she

extricated her husband from the very precarious position in which she had placed him, and she, therefore, directed her energies to bring about the conclusion of peace. "I beg of you," she writes to Catherine's confidante, the Duchesse d'Uzès, "to remind my mother of what I am to her, and to beg her not to render me, whom she brought into the world, so miserable as that I should remain deprived of her favour and protection." [1] She also wrote to *Monsieur* to request his good offices, to which that prince readily acceded. Henri III., on his side, with his finances exhausted, and harassed by the intrigues of Spain and the Guises, had no desire to prolong the war, and Anjou set out for Gascony, with full powers to treat on his behalf

As the result of a conference held at Fleix, in Périgord, a treaty was drawn up, which confirmed all previous concessions to the Reformers, and secured to Marguerite the enjoyment of her appanage. To satisfy the outraged dignity of the Queen of Navarre, Biron was superseded in his office of King's lieutenant in Guienne by the Maréchal de Matignon.

And so ended the "Lovers' War," and Marguerite and her husband must have congratulated themselves in getting very well out of what had promised to be an exceedingly awkward predicament.

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

CHAPTER XIX

Rivalry between the King of Navarre and *Monsieur* over Fosseuse appeased by Marguerite—Harlay de Chanvallon—His *liaison* with the Queen of Navarre—The Queen demands the disgrace of d'Aubigné, charged with circulating scandalous reports about her—Departure of Anjou—Passionate letters addressed to Chanvallon by Marguerite—Indiscretions of Pibrac, whom the Queen dismisses from her service—Fosseuse becomes the mistress of the King and intrigues against Marguerite—The Queen goes to Bagnères-de-Bigorre—Interview between Marguerite and Fosseuse—A Court scandal—The Queen accepts Henri III.'s invitation to visit Paris.

Anjou remained in the South until the end of the following April, notwithstanding that he was being urgently pressed to succour Cambrai, which had been duly delivered to him by d'Inchy, and was now closely besieged by the Spaniards under Parma. *Monsieur*, who had a marvellous aptitude for making mischief wherever he went, did not fail to keep up his reputation in this respect. He fell in love with the fair Fosseuse, and, for a time, there reigned between him and his royal host almost as bitter a rivalry as had existed in the days when they were both at the feet of Madame de Sauve. Nor was this all; for the King conceived the idea that his consort, through jealousy of Fosseuse, was favouring her brother's equivocal attentions to the damsel, and began to treat her with marked coldness. To remedy this painful state of affairs, the Queen was forced to intervene and secure to Henri the peaceable possession of his enchantress,

by "pointing out to her brother the misery he would bring upon her by this courtship." Whereupon that magnanimous prince, "caring as he did more for her happiness than his own, subdued his passion." [1]

Anjou had brought with him his usual train of roués and bravos, but, among his following, was a man of a different stamp. This was his grand equerry, Jacques de Harlay, Seigneur de Chanvallon, one of the handsomest men of his time. He and Marguerite had met at La Fère, during Anjou's visit to his sister after her return from Flanders, and would appear to have been very favourably impressed with one another. At La Fère, however, the Queen had been too occupied in entertaining her brother and discussing with him the prospect of his Flemish enterprise to have had much time to spare for his attendants, however fascinating. But at Cadillac, to which the Court of Navarre proceeded after the conclusion of the Treaty of Fleix, their intimacy progressed rapidly, and eventually Chanvallon avowed his passion. Marguerite reciprocated it, and the handsome cavalier does not seem to have long sighed in vain.[2]

Sainte-Beuve, who bases his opinion on a perusal of the letters which the Queen subsequently addressed to her admirer, thinks that "she loved not with the heart, but rather with the head and the imagination." [3]

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

[2] Even Marguerite's ardent apologist, M. de Saint-Poncy, who will not allow that La Môle, Bussy, and Turenne were anything more than humble worshippers, is constrained to admit this, though he excuses his heroine's conduct on the ground that she was "wounded in her wifely susceptibilities and outraged in her dignity as Queen," and "*d'une complexion trop ardente pour ne pas céder à la tentation.*"

[3] *Causeries du Lundi*, vol. vi. *La Reine Marguerite, ses mémoires et des lettres.*

However that may be, she appears to have acted with singular indiscretion, and, while at Cadillac, a report spread that her Majesty and M. de Chanvallon had been detected in a most compromising situation. The originator of this rumour was the malicious d'Aubigné—the presumed author of the *Divorce satyrique*—and the infuriated princess hurried to her consort and demanded his instant dismissal. Henri felt unable to refuse her the satisfaction she demanded; but, as he was naturally very reluctant to part with his faithful equerry, he had recourse to stratagem. D'Aubigné was ostensibly dismissed; but it was arranged that he should remain in hiding during the day, and when night fell, return to his master's apartments in the château. This arrangement continued until her Majesty's wrath was sufficiently appeased to admit of the delinquent's public restoration to his office.

At the end of April 1581, *Monsieur* took his departure, and Chanvallon followed him. This enforced separation, far from cooling Marguerite's passion, seems only to have inflamed it, and she addressed to her absent lover the most tender letters. "Absence, constraint," writes she to him, "serves to increase my love, as much as it would diminish that of a feeble soul inflamed by a vulgar passion. . . . Be sure that the hour when you change will be that of my end. . . . I live no more save in you, *mon beau tout, ma seule et parfaite beauté*. . . . I kiss a million times those beautiful eyes, that beautiful hair, my dear and sweet fetters; I kiss a million times that beautiful and lovable mouth;" and so forth.[1]

Very different in tone were the letters which Marguerite addressed to her unfortunate chancellor, Pibrac. The Queen was considerably indebted to Pibrac, who

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

had taken off her hands an hotel in Paris, which Henri III. had given her—the Hôtel d'Anjou, situated near the Louvre—at a price considerably in excess of its market value, and advanced her large sums of money, as much as 35,000 écus, according to one account. But she suspected him of playing a double part and of slandering her to Henri III., and was highly indignant. In March 1581, he wrote the princess a very imprudent letter, to warn her that an astrologer in Paris had predicted that, in the course of that month, her husband would slay her with his own hands, and imploring her to take refuge at Agen. And this he followed by another, wherein he excused his interference on the ground of the love he bore her. Marguerite, however, repulsed her grey-haired admirer's homage with disdain. "You have written," she replies, "an excuse not less indiscreet and little becoming so wise a man, namely, that nothing else had urged you to give me this warning, save the extreme passion you entertain for me, which you had not dared to confess. These are strange proceedings for a man such as you are, and would be little to your advantage, were they to come to any one's knowledge, which I do not intend them to do . . . since I desire no other witness than your conscience, which will be your judge."[1]

Nevertheless, she showed the letter to her husband, and the matter soon became common knowledge, and poor Pibrac the laughing-stock of Paris.

J'étais président
En la cour du Parlement,
Je m'en suis défait,
Reine Margot, Marguerite
Je m'en suis défait
Pour être à vous tout à fait.

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

So ran one of the numerous *chansons* that were made about him.

Moreover, the indignant Queen ordered him to surrender his seals as her chancellor, and refused to pardon him, though he sought to extenuate the inflammatory expressions which had so offended her. "Our fashion to-day," he writes, "is full of excess. One no longer makes use of the words, 'to love' and 'to serve.' One adds to them 'extremely,' 'passionately,' 'madly,' and other similar expressions; even so far as to invest with divinity things which are less than human."

The Queen of Navarre had soon a more serious cause for annoyance than the imprudent letters of her infatuated chancellor. Mlle. Fosseuse, who had, for some time, only allowed the King "such familiarities as might with all propriety be permitted," had ended, as might have been foreseen, "in surrendering herself entirely to his will," with results of a very embarrassing nature. "Whereupon," continues Marguerite, "finding herself in this condition, her bearing towards me changed, and, instead of being frank with me, as was her custom, and rendering me all the good services in her power with respect to the King my husband, she began avoiding me, and rendering me as many evil turns as she had formerly done me good ones. She possessed so much influence over the King, that, in a very short while, I perceived that he was wholly changed. He became estranged, avoided me, and no longer took the same pleasure in my society as when Fosseuse had conducted herself with propriety."

On the return of the King and Queen to Nérac, Fosseuse, either in order to conceal her condition, "*ou bien pour se défaire de ce qu'elle avait*," put it into his

Majesty's head to propose to his consort that they should pay a visit to the baths of Eaux-Chaudes (Aigues-Caudes) in the valley of Osseau, in Béarn. "I begged the King my husband to excuse me if I did not accompany him to Eaux Chaudes," writes Marguerite, "as he knew that, since the indignity to which I had been subjected at Pau, I had made a vow never to enter Béarn, unless the Catholic religion were re-established there. He then told me that 'his girl' (for thus he designated Fosseuse) required to take the waters, for the indigestion from which she suffered. I told him that I was perfectly willing that she should go there. He replied that it would not be seemly for her to go without me; that it would cause people to imagine evil where none existed; and he became very much annoyed with me, because I did not wish to take her."

Finally, it was arranged that Fosseuse, accompanied by two of her colleagues, Henri's former flame, Mlle. de Rebours, and a Mlle. Villesave, and their *gouvernante*, should go to Eaux-Chaudes, while the Queen was to betake herself to Bagnères-de-Bigorre.

It would appear that, at this time, Marguerite entertained some hope of presenting her fickle husband with an heir, for we find her writing to Catherine: "I am at the baths of Bagnères, whither I have come to see whether I shall be so fortunate as to increase the number of your servants. Several persons have found them very beneficial. I shall not fail, on my return to Nérac, to acquaint you with the benefit I have received."[1]

In this, however, she was doomed to disappointment,

[1] *Lettres inédites de Marguerite de Valois*, Archives Historiques of Gascony, cited by M. Charles Merki, *La Reine Margot et la fin des Valois*, p. 247.

nor was his chagrin diminished by the fact that she was receiving daily reports from Mlle. de Rebours—"a corrupt and deceitful girl, who was only desirous of ousting Fosseuse, in order that she might supplant her in the good graces of the King my husband"—that Fosseuse was using every endeavour to estrange his Majesty from his wife, "and was persuading herself that, if she had a son, and could get rid of her, she might marry the King."[1]

In consequence, the Queen's sojourn at Bagnères seems to have been a very mournful one, and she assures us that "she shed tears as numerous as the drops of water which the King and his companions were drinking at Eaux-Chaudes, notwithstanding that she was surrounded by all the Catholic nobility of those parts, who used every endeavour to make her forget her troubles."

After a stay of four or five weeks at Eaux-Chaudes, Henri and the maids-of-honour returned, and the Court proceeded to Nérac, where the condition of Mlle. Fosseuse became the chief topic of conversation, not only at the Court, but in all the country round. The Queen determined to put a stop to the scandal, and, summoning her rival to her cabinet, addressed her as follows:

"In spite of your having for some time estranged yourself from me, and of people having endeavoured to induce me to believe that you are making mischief between the King my husband and myself, the friendship that I have borne you, and that which I entertain for the honourable persons to whom you are related [the

[1] It would appear that Henri, in accordance with the practice he adopted with several later enchantresses, had promised the lady that, if she bore him a son, he would repudiate the Queen and marry her.

Montmorency family], does not admit of my refusing you assistance in the unfortunate position in which you find yourself. And this, I beg, you will not deny me, nor desire to ruin both your reputation and my own; for, since you are in my service, I have as much interest in the matter as you have. You may rely on my acting towards you like a mother. I have found means to go, under the pretext of the plague, which, as you are aware, is in this country, and even in this city, to Mas d'Agenais, a house belonging to the King my husband, situated in a very lonely spot. I will take with me only such following as you may choose. Meanwhile, the King my husband will go hunting in another direction, and will not return until after your delivery, and we shall thus put an end to the scandal, which concerns me no less than yourself."

Instead of being grateful for her Majesty's magnanimity, Fosseuse answered, with a fine assumption of injured innocence, that she would give the lie to all those who spoke ill of her, and accused Marguerite of seeking a pretext to compass her ruin. Then she left the Queen's cabinet in a rage, and went to inform the King of what had passed. Henri was no less incensed than his mistress, declared that she had been shamefully maligned, and did not fail to show Marguerite how much he resented her interference.

However, one night, some three or four months after the conversation just related, there came a doctor knocking at the door of the royal bedchamber, with tidings of a very urgent nature for his Majesty's ear alone. "My husband," writes Marguerite, "was greatly embarrassed as to what he should do, fearing, on the one hand, that she (Fosseuse) might be discovered, and, on the other, that she might not receive proper

attention, for he loved her dearly. Finally he decided to confess everything to me, and to implore me to go to her assistance, being assured, notwithstanding what had happened in the past, that he would always find me ready to serve him. He therefore drew aside my bed-curtains, and said to me: '*M'amie*, I have concealed something from you that I must now avow. I entreat you to pardon me, and not to bear in mind what I have said to you on the matter; but to oblige me by rising at once and going to the assistance of Fosseuse, who is very ill. I am sure that, seeing her in this state, you will not harbour resentment for what has passed. You know how much I love her; I entreat you, therefore, to do me this favour."

The Queen replied that "she honoured him too much to take anything amiss that he proposed," and that she would hasten to Fosseuse, and "behave to her as though she were her own daughter." At the same time, she advised her husband to go away on a hunting expedition, so as to minimise the danger of the affair getting about.

Marguerite kept her word, and "God willed that Fosseuse should give birth to a daughter, who, moreover, was still-born." If a son had been born and had survived, who could have foreseen the unpleasant consequences that might have ensued? But "in spite of employing the greatest discretion," the news of the event was soon all over the château, and when the King returned from the chase, he begged his wife to pay a second visit to Fosseuse, thinking by this means to silence the rumours that were afloat.

Her Majesty, however, not unnaturally, considering that, in consenting to act the part of a mother to her husband's mistress, she had carried her complacency

far enough for one day, declined. "I replied," she writes, "that I had visited her when she had need of my assistance, but that now she no longer required it, and that, if I went to her, I should be revealing rather than concealing what had occurred, and that every one would point the finger of scorn at me. He was extremely angry with me, which displeased me very much, since I did not consider that, after what I had done in the morning, I deserved such a reward." And Marguerite adds: "She (Fosseuse) often incited him to get into these tempers against me."

These domestic annoyances caused Marguerite to conceive a decided aversion for the little Court of Nérac, which she had once found so pleasant, and to inspire her with a desire to leave it for a time, and return to Paris. During her residence in Béarn and Gascony, she had received more than one invitation from Henri III. and Catherine to visit them, and soon after the Fosseuse affair, it happened that another and particularly pressing one arrived. Henri III., who was kept well informed by his agents at Nérac of all that went on at that Court, and had been duly acquainted with the details of the recent scandal, judged that, after what had occurred, the indignant Queen would not be averse to a temporary separation from her husband. And that she might not delay her departure from need of the necessary funds, he transmitted to her the sum of 15,000 écus.

It must not be supposed that, in sending this invitation, his Majesty was actuated by any motive of affection. On the contrary, since the "Lovers' War," he had detested his sister, if possible, more cordially than ever. But he had found, to his cost, that she was a force to be reckoned

with, and desired to make one more effort to disarm her hostility and make her his ally. That he would be successful in this, he probably entertained but slight hope. Nevertheless, to separate her and her husband could not fail to be of advantage to him ("It would prove like the breaking of the Macedonian phalanx," says Marguerite); while if he could contrive to put an end to the good understanding on political matters, which, in spite of their domestic differences, had always existed between them, it would be a great point gained.

Several reasons contributed to determine Marguerite to accept the invitation. The revenues of her appanage were in arrears, and she was deeply in debt; a visit to the capital was absolutely necessary to restore her affairs to some degree of order. She had grown tired of Nérac, and looked forward with all the zest of an exile to the gaieties of the Louvre; while "she also thought that her departure might serve to turn the King her husband from his passion for Fosseuse—whom she was taking with her—and that once she (Fosseuse) was out of his sight, he might possibly take up with some one else, who would be less hostile to her." Finally—and this probably had more weight with her than anything—she cherished the hope of meeting *le beau* Chanvallon again, and renewing with him their interrupted romance.

The King of Navarre, for some time, strongly opposed his wife's resolution, being unwilling to resign himself to the loss of his Fosseuse. "He became, in consequence, much kinder to me," says Marguerite, "and was anxious that I should abandon my intention of returning to France. But, since I had already given my promise in my letters to the King and the Queen my mother,

and had even received the aforementioned sum [the 15,000 écus for the journey], the evil fate which was luring me to Court prevailed over the scanty desire that I felt to proceed thither, now that the King my husband was beginning to treat me with more affection." [1]

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

CHAPTER XX

The *Mémoires* of Marguerite de Valois terminate at the date of her return to Paris—Question of their continuation considered—Henri III. accords his sister a very gracious reception, and consents to the augmentation of her appanage—Marguerite purchases the Hôtel de Birague—Her correspondence with her husband—Fresh rupture between them, owing to the Queen of Navarre's dismissal of Fosseuse from her service—Letters of Marguerite and Catherine de' Medici to the King of Navarre—Marguerite's mortification at the marriage of Chanvallon—Total failure of Anjou's Flemish enterprise—Strained relations between the Queen of Navarre and Henri III.—Renewal of the *liaison* between Marguerite and Chanvallon—A courier bearing a letter from the King to the Duc de Joyeuse murdered and robbed—Henri III. publicly insults his sister at a ball at the Louvre, and orders her to return to her husband—Between Palaiseau and Saint-Clair, she and some of her attendants are arrested and conveyed to Montargis—Henri III. interrogates Mesdames de Duras and de Béthune—Marguerite and her attendants liberated, through the intervention of Catherine—The King of Navarre refuses to receive his wife, until his brother-in-law accords him a satisfactory explanation of these proceedings—Marguerite's letter to her mother—After long negotiations between the two Courts, a reconciliation is affected.

The *Mémoires* of Marguerite de Valois unfortunately terminate at the date when she left Nérac to return to Paris, that is to say, at the end of January 1582, a circumstance which is the more to be regretted, since the latter part of her life was not less interesting than that

which we have already recounted, and contains many incidents which she alone could have satisfactorily explained. However, if the *Mémoires* fail us, we have, on the other hand, a number of her letters, which serve in some degree to supply the omission.[1]

Marguerite, accompanied by her husband, left Nérac on January 26, 1582, and proceeded, by way of Jarnac, Saint-Jean—d'Angely, Saintes, and Saint-Maixent, to La Mothe Saint-Heraye, where, on March 31, they were met by Catherine. The interview was a very cordial one, and Catherine would fain have persuaded the King of Navarre to accompany his wife to Paris. But the astute Béarnais courteously excused himself; having enjoyed the sweets of liberty and independence so long, he had no mind to return to the cage from which he had experienced so much difficulty in escaping. He, therefore, accompanied the two Queens as far as the Château of Montreuil-Bonnin, in Vienne, and then made his way to La Rochelle and thence to Montauban, where a Huguenot convention was about to meet.

L'Estoile, by some extraordinary error—which is repeated by M. de Saint-Poncy—reports the Queen of

[1] Many historians are of opinion that the manuscript which has come down to us forms only a portion of Marguerite's work, and that the *Mémoires* were continued at least down to the time of her installation at the Château of Usson, in November 1586, if not considerably beyond it. It certainly seems to have been the Queen's intention to continue them, for, in her dedication to Brantôme, she informs him that she will rectify certain details of his *éloge* of her, notably, concerning what occurred at Agen and her departure from Usson, that is to say, events which happened in the years 1585 and 1587. If then the *Mémoires* were continued, what became of the continuation? Possibly it was lost, but, far more probably, it was deliberately suppressed, since it must have contained not a little that was far from palatable to certain persons in high places.

Navarre's arrival in Paris on March 8; but, as a matter of fact, she did not reach the capital until May 28, after having made a short stay at Chenonceaux and one of some length at Fontainebleau, where she found the King.

Marguerite met with a very gracious reception from Henri III., who, for his own purposes, was extremely anxious to conciliate her, and he readily gave his consent to Catherine's proposal to make over to her daughter the duchy of Valois, of which she was dowager, and the counties of Senlis, Clermont, and Étampes, in exchange for those of Quercy and Gaure. This addition to her appanage considerably increased the princess's revenues and importance.

As the suite of the Queen of Navarre was too numerous to be accommodated in the Louvre, and she had been compelled to dispose of the Hôtel d'Anjou, it was necessary for her to find a residence, and she, accordingly, purchased for 28,000 écus the house of the Chancellor Birague, situated in the Rue Culture-Sainte-Catherine.

With her husband, Marguerite maintained an active correspondence, and showed herself, as she always was, keenly alive to his political interests. "We shall see the King at Fontainebleau in four days' time," she writes to him on the way to Paris; "and the day following, I will despatch a gentleman to acquaint you with what has happened; and five or six days later, I will send another to inform you what, after the first greetings, which are commonly marked by constraint and dissimulation, I shall be able to discover in respect of their wishes concerning us." She warns him that the King is reported to be much displeased with the conduct of two of the King of Navarre's followers, one of whom had

been waging a little war on his own account, while the other had refused to surrender a town which the Huguenots had occupied during the last war. Catherine was urging Henri III. to visit the South, in order to re-establish order there, and Marguerite begs her husband to set matters right himself, "so that the King may be satisfied and his desire to come thither removed." In another letter, written shortly after her arrival in Paris, she points out that he might greatly strengthen his position were he to visit the capital. "If you were here," she writes, "you would be the man on whom both sides would depend. You would regain the servants whom you have lost, owing to the length of these troubles, and would acquire more of them in a week than you would in all your lifetime in Gascony." But nothing could induce Henri to venture into the lion's den again.

She gives him, too, all the news of the Court. "M. de Nemours has become so remarkably stout that he is quite deformed; M. de Guise has grown thin, and seems much aged. . . . The King has been hunting for three days, not without wishing that you were there, and to a concert at the Louvre, which lasted all night. If I dared to tell you of it, you would abandon agriculture and Timon's humour to come among men." [1]

But this good understanding between husband and wife was not of long duration; and it was Fosseuse who was again the cause of the rupture.

Yielding to the urgent representations of Catherine and of the pious Queen, the latter of whom was inexpressibly shocked at seeing a lady of such unenviable notoriety in attendance upon her sister-in-law, Marguerite had dismissed that errant damsel from her service,

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

although, by wayof compensation, she, shortly afterwards, arranged for her a very advantageous marriage with François de Broc, Baron de Cinq-Mars. Henri, on learning that his favourite had received her *congé*, was highly indignant, and despatched Frontenac, one of his gentlemen, to his wife to acquaint her with his displeasure. Marguerite, on this occasion, was unable to restrain her feelings, and, in answer to her husband's remonstrances, sent the following spirited reply :

Marguerite *to the* King of Navarre.

"You say that there will be nothing for me to be ashamed of in pleasing you. I believe it also, judging you to be so reasonable that you will not command me to do anything which may be unworthy of a person of my quality; nor which affects my honour, in which you have too much interest. And, if you demand that I shall keep near my person a girl whom you, in the opinion of every one, have made a mother, you will find that that would be to put me to shame, both by reason of the insult to which you subject me, and on account of the reputation that I should thereby acquire. You write to me that, in order to close the mouths of the King, the Queens, and those who speak to me about it, I should tell them that you love her, and that, for this reason, I love her too. This reason would be a good one, if I were speaking of one of your servants, whether male or female, but of your mistress! If I had been born in a condition unworthy of the honour of being your wife, this answer would not be an unbecoming one for me; but, being such as I am, it would be very unseemly. Also, I shall hinder myself from advancing her interests. I have suffered what, I will not say a princess, but a

simple demoiselle [1] does not suffer, having succoured her [Fosseuse], concealed her fault, and always kept her near my person. If you do not call that being desirous of pleasing you, I know not what you can expect." [2]

This admirable letter ought to have convinced the infatuated King that he had gone too far, and drawn an apology from him. But, unhappily, Catherine took upon herself to interfere, and wrote her son-in-law a sharp reprimand, which deeply offended him and incensed him still further against his wife.

CATHERINE DE' MEDICI *to the* KING OF NAVARRE.

" . . . You are not the first husband, young and with little prudence in such matters; but I certainly find you the first and the only one, who, after an affair of this nature, holds such language to his wife. I had the honour to marry the King [Henri II.] my lord and your sovereign . . . and when Madame de Flemming [3] was with child, he considered it very fitting that she should be sent away. With regard to Madame de Valentinois [4] and also Madame d'Étampes, he behaved in a perfectly honourable manner. This is not the way to treat women

[1] She means the wife of an ordinary citizen. The wives of the *bourgeoisie*, at this period, did not take the titles of *dame* or *madame*, which were reserved for the wives of the nobility or daughters of noble parents who had married citizens. They were called *demoiselle* or *mademoiselle*. This custom prevailed for more than a century longer. Thus we find the mother of La Bruyère described in a legal document as a "*demoiselle veuve*," while La Fontaine, in his correspondence, invariably speaks of his wife as "*mademoiselle*."

[2] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

[3] The mother of Henri d'Angoulême.

[4] Diane de Poitiers.

of condition and of so distinguished a family, and to expose them to the insults of a licentious public, for every one is aware of the child whom she has had; and to send your complaint by a little gallant, presumptuous and imprudent to have accepted such a command from his master! I cannot believe that it comes from you, since you are too well-born not to know how you ought to live with the daughter of your King, and the sister of him who commands in all the realm, who, moreover, honours you and loves you, as a woman of condition ought to do. And, if I knew her to be different, I should not wish to support her or to write anything to make you recognise the wrong that you have done her. . . . I have caused this pretty fool [Fosseuse] to be sent away, for, so long as I live, I cannot endure to see anything which may hinder or diminish the affection which those who are so near to me, as she [Marguerite] is, ought to bear one another; and I entreat you that, after this fine messenger of a Frontenac has said the worst he can to estrange you and your wife, to consider the wrong that you have done her, and return to the right path." [1]

Hard upon this new rupture with her husband came a fresh source of chagrin for Marguerite. In seeing Chanvallon once more and in resuming possession of this fascinating gallant, she had believed herself secure against any infidelity on his part. Such, however, was not the case. Whether it was that he feared the resentment of Henri III., or saw in his *liaison* with the Queen of Navarre an obstacle to his advancement at Court, Chanvallon sought to free himself, by taking a wife, whose

[1] Bibliothèque Nationale, Coll. Dupuy, cited by La Ferrière, *Trois amoureuses au XVI^e. siècle: Marguerite de Valois.*

rank and wealth might serve as a stepping-stone to Fortune, and, in August 1582, married Catherine de la Mark, daughter of Robert de la Mark, Duc de Bouillon. During her visit to Bagnères-de-Bigorre, Marguerite had herself proposed to give him a wife, "a widow, beautiful, an honest woman, with an income of 30,000 livres and 200,000 livres in the bank." But then this lady had been one of her own choosing, who could be trusted to efface herself whenever the Queen required, and her anger and mortification at Chanvallon having dared to wed without consulting her knew no bounds. "There is then no longer justice in Heaven nor fidelity on earth," she writes to him. "Triumph, triumph over my too ardent love! Boast of having deceived me; laugh and mock at it with her, concerning whom the only consolation that I receive, is that her lack of merit will be the just penalty of the wrong that you have committed . . . When you receive this letter, the last, I beg you to return it to me, since I do not desire that at this fine interview, to which you are going this evening, it serves for a topic of conversation to the father and the daughter."

The total failure of Anjou's Flemish enterprise was perhaps as great a blow to Marguerite as the defection of her lover. *Monsieur*, who had accepted the government of the States, with the title of Duke of Brabant, had been waging war against the Spaniards with indifferent success throughout the summer and autumn of 1582. Distrusted by the States, he had little effective power, and this and his jealousy of the Prince of Orange, determined him, when winter caused the cessation of hostilities, to make a *coup d'état*, and capture, with his French troops, the chief towns of Flanders. At Dunkerque, Ostend,

and several other places the plan was successful. But at Antwerp, where the prince in person made the attempt, it signally failed. When his troops, some four thousand in number, entered the town, they found themselves attacked on all sides by the infuriated citizens, and nearly half of them were killed in the streets or drowned in the Maas. Anjou, with the remainder, retired in disgrace to Termonde, and afterwards to Dunkerque, whence he returned to France in the following summer.

The news of "*la folie d'Anvers*" reached Paris on January 28, 1583, and created general indignation and grief, for members of some of the noblest families in France were amongst the slain. "Would to God that you had died young!" exclaimed Catherine bitterly, when she and Anjou met, some months later. "You would not then have been the cause of the death of so many brave gentlemen." Henri III., however, secretly rejoiced at his brother's discomfiture, since, according to the Venetian Ambassador, he feared him more, once he should be master of the Netherlands, than he feared Philip II.

In the meanwhile, the relations between the Queen of Navarre and Henri III. had again become very strained. Marguerite had refused to lend herself to his political schemes, had scoffed at the ridiculous mummeries, whereby the King believed that he was making atonement for the disorders of his life, and, worst of all, was at daggers drawn with his two chief *mignons*, d'Epernon[1] and Joyeuse.[2] The princess, whose temper had perhaps

[1] Jean Louis de Nogaret de la Valette, born in 1554; created Duc d'Épernon in 1581. He played an important part under the Regency of Marie de' Medici. Died in 1642.

[2] Anne d'Arques, born in 1561; created Duc de Joyeuse in 1581; killed, in 1587, at the Battle of Coutras.

not been improved by Chanvallon's defection, indulged in biting sarcasms at the expense of these arrogant young men, who retaliated by circulating very injurious reports about her Majesty's private life, and doing everything in their power to embitter their master against her.

A visit which the King paid to Mezières, in June 1583, brought about a momentary truce. But, as ill-luck would have it, during his absence, Chanvallon, who had fallen into disgrace with Anjou, returned unexpectedly to Paris. The cause of his disgrace is uncertain; some writers assert that he had betrayed the duke's confidence; but, if we are to believe Varillas, the reason was that he had "boasted of his *bonne fortune* with one of the greatest ladies of the kingdom."[1] Anyway, to Paris he came, and without his wife.

Marguerite no sooner beheld her faithless lover than all her passion revived; she forgave him and hastened to resume with him their old relations. But alas! Chanvallon proved himself wholly unworthy of her clemency; for, after a week or two of bliss, the Queen's old rival, Madame de Sauve, not content with the adoration of both d'Épernon and Guise, conceived a fancy to subdue Chanvallon likewise; and succeeded.

Deeply mortified, the Queen determined to leave Paris, and return to Gascony; but funds for the journey were not immediately available, and she was compelled to postpone her departure. At the end of June, she fell ill, and her illness furnished a pretext for the most damaging reports. "The Queen of Navarre is *enceinte*, or suffering from the dropsy," wrote Busini, the Tuscan Ambassador to his Court.[2]

[1] *Histoire de Henri III.*

[2] *Négociations diplomatiques avec la Toscane*, iv. 466, cited by La Ferrière.

Henri III. returned to Paris. Catherine, who always exerted her influence to prevent scandals in the Royal Family, was absent, having gone to Chaulnes, in Picardy, to administer reproaches and consolation to the discomfited Anjou. Marguerite, conscious of the danger which threatened her and Chanvallon, determined to send the gallant away. "Please God," she writes to him, "that on me alone this storm may expend itself. But to place you in danger! Ah, no, my life; there is no suffering so cruel to which I would not prefer to submit. I offer you a conclusive proof of it, by depriving myself of the pleasure of seeing you, which I hold to be as necessary to me as that of the sun to the spring flowers." [1]

From this letter, it is evident that, in spite of Chanvallon's infidelity, Marguerite had not had sufficient strength of mind to break off her relations with him.

The Queen of Navarre's fears were soon realised. Acquainted with the injurious reports that were in circulation about his sister, Henri III. suborned one of Marguerite's waiting-women, who furnished his Majesty with a full, true, and particular account of the Chanvallon affair, together with many piquant details concerning his predecessors in her mistress's affections. The King smiled grimly and waited for a favourable opportunity of making use of the knowledge he had gained.

An unexpected incident precipitated the crisis. In the previous May, the Duc de Joyeuse had set out on a journey to Italy. His object, he announced, was to discharge a vow he had made to Our Lady of Loretto, on behalf of his sick wife, and to keep up this fiction, the King and Queen had entrusted him with gifts to

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

present at the same shrine, in their names. But his real goal was Rome, where he had been charged, by Henri III., with some very important negotiations with the Holy See. At the beginning of August, the King wrote a long letter to his favourite, containing, if we are to believe Varillas, "odious things about his sister's conduct." But this epistle the duke never received, for the courier who bore it, had not proceeded many leagues on his journey, when he was attacked by four masked men, who left him dead on the road, and carried off his Majesty's letter.

This outrage was commonly attributed to agents of the Queen of Navarre, though in all probability, unjustly. As both M. de Saint-Poncy and M. Merki point out, the correspondence of the King with Joyeuse was of far greater interest to the Guises than to Marguerite; and the leaders of the League were naturally extremely anxious to learn what was happening at Rome;[1] while the fact that Henri III., who was on his way with Queen Louise to the waters of Bourbon-Lancy, immediately turned back, on learning what had occurred, and showed great agitation, would appear to indicate that the letter must have contained something of much greater importance than scandalous gossip about his sister. However that may be, the King affected to believe the rumour which was current, and made it the pretext for a scandalous scene.

On the evening of August 8, there was a ball at the Louvre, and, as Queen Louise was at Bourbon-Lancy, and Catherine in Picardy, the King begged his sister to

[1] Busbecq, the Austrian Ambassador, in a letter to his Court, ascribes the outrage to the "malcontents," by which he presumably means the League.

do the honours. Suspecting nothing, Marguerite consented and took her place on the royal daïs. But, when the gaiety of the evening was at its height, followed by d'Épernon and several other favourites, Henri III. approached the throne where his sister was seated, and there, before the whole company, and in a voice which could be heard by every one in the room, he upbraided her with her amours with Chanvallon, accused her of having had a child by him, and enumerated all the lovers whom she had had since her marriage, "naming so precisely dates and places," says the Austrian Ambassador, Busbecq, "that he seemed to have been a witness of the incidents of which he spoke."

Stupefied with horror and amazement, the unfortunate princess listened, silent and motionless, unable to utter a single word in her justification. Her malevolent brother, however, scarcely gave her time to reply, but terminated his denunciation with an imperious order to her to quit Paris, and "deliver the Court from her contagious presence."

During the night, a number of masked men entered Chanvallon's lodging, and ransacked it from cellar to attic. They had orders to apprehend that gentleman, but, warned in time, he had fled to Beaumont, and taken refuge in the house of his cousin, Achille de Harlay, Président of the Parlement.

On the following morning (August 9), a coach drawn by four horses drew up before the Hôtel de Birague. Dressed in a plain black gown, and with her features concealed by a mask, Marguerite entered it, accompanied by two of her confidantes, Mesdames de Duras and de Béthune, and a favourite waiting-woman named Barbe, whose mother had filled the post of nurse to the princess.

Several gentlemen of her suite and a few servants had orders to follow her on horseback. The poor Queen was in a pitiable state of agitation, and, as she turned to bid farewell to those of her Household who remained behind, she remarked that she was as unfortunate as Marie Stuart, and that she would be grateful indeed to any one who would have the courage to poison her.

It was Marguerite's intention to proceed to the Château of Vendôme, which belonged to Henri of Navarre, and remain there until she had ascertained what kind of reception she was likely to receive at Nérac, since she could not doubt that the news of the scene at the Louvre would very soon reach her husband's ears. But the animosity of Henri III. was not yet satisfied. About four leagues from Paris, between Palaiseau and Saint-Clair, the Queen's coach was stopped by sixty archers of the King's guard, under one Larchamp de Grimonville, who roughly tore the masks from the faces of her Majesty and her ladies. "Miserable wretch!" exclaimed the outraged princess, "do you dare to lift your hand against the sister of your King?" "I am acting by his orders," replied the officer, drily. He then proceeded to arrest Mesdames de Béthune and de Duras, the Queen's equerry, secretary, and physician, and several other members of her company, and conducted the prisoners to the Château of Montargis, where they were placed in separate chambers.[1]

The following day, Marguerite's attendants were very closely interrogated, first, by a magistrate sent by the King, and, subsequently, by his Majesty himself; his object being to discover what truth there was in the

[1] There are several versions of this episode. D'Aubigné places it at the Barrière Saint-Jacques, in Paris, and L'Estoile at Palaiseau itself.

HENRI III., KING OF FRANCE

From an Engraving by L'Armessin

HENRY. 3. ROY DE FRANCE,
et de POLOGNE. Fils d'henry II. Et de Cath.ne de Medicis. Nagit le 19.e 7.e 1551. Et leu Roy de Pologne en 1573. et reuint prendre possession du Roy.me de frãce, par la mort de Charles IX. Son frere en 1574. Il fut Sacré a Reims. Il épousa Louise de Lorraine fille du Comte de Vaudemõt en 1575. il Institua l'Ordre du S.t Esprit. Sur le Regne de Charles IX.ce rallumerent les Guerres Civiles qui auoient trauaillé le R.e de Conde. Et le duc d'Alençon rebelles au Roy. Entrerent en france auec vne Armée estrangere, le duc de Guyenne estoit amateur, fortifiée de 12 pars. Tous le titre de la Ligue. Mais les Catholiques. Et des huguenots prirent Conuocation en 1583. le Pape Sixte V. Excommunia le Roy de Nauarre. Et le R.e de Conde, les declarans Incapables de Succeder a la Couronne, de droit acquis. Par la mort du duc d'Alençon, Ces 2 p.ces firent ce qui pour Iustifier leurs pretentions, en 1587 le roy de Nauarre gaigna la bataille de Coutras, ou le duc de Ioyeuse fut tue, mais le duc de Guyse, gaigna Celle d'Auneau pres de Chartres, en 1588, ce duc fut apres receu a paris, auec Acclamation du peuple, le Roy voyant ces Emotions populaires, en faueur des Guyse, Ialoux de Son Authorité, et ne ce Croy.t pas en Sortit en colere, resolu de la perdre, et la Ville de Paris, en Sortit en colere, resolu de la perdre, et le duc, ce qui fit aux Estats de Blois, ou ce duc, et le Card.l son frere furent tuez, le duc de Nemours, ce tint à Paris, aupres du duc d'Aumalle, qui y Comandoit, par Ordre des Seize, le duc de Mayenne, ce retira en bourgogne. Pend.t tous ces troubles, le duc de Sauoye, S'empara du Marq.t de Saluces, Apres la mort des Guyse, les meilleures Villes, ce remirẽt à Obeissance du roy qui Voul.t reduire Paris, la Capitalle, vint auec le Roy de Nauarre, l'Assieger, et Estant à S.t Cloud, duec Son Armée, il fut tué, d'vn Coup de Courteau, dans le Ventre, par vn Iacobin, nõmé Iacq.s Clement, le 1.er d'Iout 1589, Agé de 38, ans, Auec qui finit la maison des Valois.

report which he had affected to believe that their mistress had secretly given birth to a child by Chanvallon, with the connivance of Mesdames de Béthune and de Duras. The two ladies in question were subjected to an especially rigorous examination by the King, "who delighted in doing evil"; but, to his intense mortification, they persisted in denying the accusation, and neither threats nor cajolery could wring anything from them to incriminate the Queen. The evidence of Marguerite's other attendants proved equally unsatisfactory, from his Majesty's point of view; and there can be little doubt that the charge was nothing but a malicious slander, started and propagated by the princess's enemies.[1]

The news of the indignity inflicted on her daughter threw the Queen-Mother into the greatest consternation, and she wrote to her confidant, Villeroy, that she was "beside herself with affliction." She immediately despatched the Bishop of Langres to expostulate with the King; and Henri, having failed to discover anything further, liberated the prisoners, and permitted Marguerite to continue her journey, having, however, first insisted that she should dismiss Mesdames de Béthune and de Duras from her service.

This unworthy censor of his sister's morals found

[1] "The Queen was innocent of that which was imputed to her," remarks Brantôme, "as I happen to know." On the other hand, Dupleix declares that Marguerite gave birth to a son by Chanvallon. "He is still living," continues the historian; "he is a Capuchin called Friar Ange; I was formerly acquainted with him." (*Histoire de Henri IV.*, p. 595.) Apart from the fact that Dupleix is quite unworthy of belief where Marguerite is concerned, M. de Saint-Poncy points out that this Friar Ange must have been born some years before the intrigue with Chanvallon began, since in 1603 he was a full-fledged monk and confessor to Henriette d'Entragues, Henri IV.'s mistress.

himself in a distinctly embarrassing position. His hatred of Marguerite had led him to support a charge which could not be upheld, and, in so doing, to offer a serious affront to her husband, whose resentment might assume a very unpleasant form; and his Majesty had no desire to have another "Lovers' War" on his hands at that moment. He, therefore, resolved to forestall Marguerite's complaints, and wrote to his brother-in-law, informing him that the scandalous lives led by Mesdames de Béthune and de Duras had obliged him to dismiss them from the Queen of Navarre's service, "as most pernicious vermin, not to be endured about the person of a princess."

The King of Navarre was hunting at Saint-Foix-sur-Durdogne when he received the letter, which Henri III., with characteristic impertinence, had entrusted to one of his valets of the Wardrobe. Unaware as yet of the actual facts, he replied, thanking his Majesty, a little ironically, for his solicitude for his wife's reputation. "The rumours of the evil and scandalous lives of Mesdames de Duras and de Béthune," he writes, "reached me a long time ago. But I considered that my wife, having the honour to be near your Majesties, I should be wronging your natural goodness were I to take upon myself to be more solicitous from a distance than your Majesties close at hand. I was resolved that, when my wife should set out on her journey to return to me, to beg her to get rid of them with as little scandal as possible. I am extremely anxious to have her here; she can never come too soon." But, a day or two later, the truth was known, and very

[1] *Lettres missives de Henri IV.* La Ferrière, *Trois Amoureuses au XVI^e siècle : Marguerite de Valois.*

unpalatable it was, even to one so indifferent to his own and his wife's honour as the King of Navarre; for the affair had become common knowledge, and all France was debating it, while the foreign Ambassadors had not failed to send lengthy accounts to their respective Courts.

Matters were further complicated by a second letter from Henri III., in which he begged his brother-in-law not to attach any importance to the reports which had reached him, but to receive his wife back, as a most regrettable mistake had been committed, and the charge against her had been found to be false and calumnious.

Uncertain how to act, the King of Navarre, on the advice of his councillors, finally decided to despatch the brave and accomplished Duplessis-Mornay to Henri III., to demand an explanation. The "Pope of the Huguenots," as the Catholics had dubbed Mornay, found the King at Lyons, on his way to join Queen Louise at the waters of Bourbon-Lancy; and, on being admitted to an audience, demanded, in the name of his master, the reason of the treatment which the Queen of Navarre had received. "It is an affront," said he, "which no princess of her rank has ever before received. It is impossible to conceal it; the incident took place, in the day time, on a high-road; all Europe is discussing it. The King of Navarre has reason to fear that the Queen his wife has committed some very criminal act, since you yourself, Sire, whose kindness is so well known, have been able to treat thus your own sister. Of what then is she guilty to be so cruelly humiliated? What action ought her husband to take in such trying circumstances?"

The King, evading the question, sought to throw the blame on Mesdames de Béthune and de Duras, whose

conduct, he declared, had been scandalous; but Mornay stopped him, observing coldly: "I am not here to plead their cause. The King of Navarre would not send an Ambassador on such a mission, and I respect myself too much to undertake it. The question at issue concerns the Queen his wife. If she has deserved the affront, he demands justice from you against her, as the master of the house, the father of the family. But, if she is the victim of false reports, he begs you to punish openly those who have calumniated her."

Henri III., much disconcerted, declared that matters had been greatly exaggerated, and had not passed in the way the King of Navarre had been led to believe. But Mornay boldly replied that there could be no possible question in regard to the facts, as the affront had taken place in broad daylight and on the high-road. "Your Majesty," added he, "has done either too much or too little: too much, if no fault has been committed, or if it be a venial one; too little, if the fault merited such a punishment."

"From whom do you obtain all these mischievous reports?" inquired the King. And Mornay forthwith proceeded to adduce evidence which showed that his master was but too well-informed.

Henri, completely nonplussed, fell back upon the absence of the Queen-Mother and Anjou. Their honour, he declared, was as much concerned as his own; it was his wish, nay his duty, to consult them before taking any further steps in the matter. "That will entail a considerable delay," replied Mornay; "the arrow is in the wound; you do not extract it. The Queen your sister is on her way to rejoin the King her husband. What will Christendom say, if he receives her thus

besmirched?" "What can it say?" snapped Henri, "save that she is the sister of your King."

Finally, in order to get rid of Mornay, his Majesty offered to send a "person of consideration" to his brother of Navarre with a satisfactory explanation, and promised to give the Ambassador a letter in his own hand to carry to his master.[1]

Marguerite, meanwhile, was at Vendôme, where her distress of mind was augmented by the fact that she was almost entirely without resources. From Vendôme she wrote to her mother the following piteous letter:

THE QUEEN OF NAVARRE *to* CATHERINE DE MEDICI.

"MADAME,—Since my unfortunate destiny has brought me to such misery that I know not if you can desire the preservation of my life; at least, Madame, I am able to hope that you desire the preservation of my honour; it being so bound up with yours, and with that of all those to whom I have the honour to be related, that no shame can touch me in which they do not have part. Which causes me, Madame, to implore you very humbly to be unwilling to permit that the pretext of my death be used at the expense of my reputation, and to be willing to do so much, not for my own sake, but for the sake of those to whom I am so nearly related, that it may please you that I have some lady of quality and worthy of trust, who may be able, while I am alive, to bear witness to the condition in which I am, and who, after my death, may be present, when my body is opened, in order that she may be able, through her knowledge of this last

[1] *Mémoires de Duplessis-Mornay.*

injustice, to make every one aware of the wrong which has been done. I do not say this in order to hinder the execution of my enemies' design, and it is unnecessary for them to fear that, on this account, a pretext for causing my death will fail them. If I receive this favour from you, I will, while I am alive, write and sign everything that will be required of me." [1]

Touched by her daughter's distress, Catherine sent her 200,000 livres, which enabled Marguerite to continue her journey. From Vendôme, she proceeded, by easy stages, to Plessis-lès-Tours, thence to Poitiers, and the end of September found her at Cognac. At this last town, she received a letter from her husband, forbidding her to enter his dominions, until a full and satisfactory explanation had been accorded him by Henri III. The King of Navarre, truth to tell, was by no means anxious for the return of his wife, as he was now desperately enamoured of Diane d'Andoins, Comtesse de Gramont ("*la belle* Corisande"), widow of Henri III.'s *mignon*, who had gained such ascendency over his Majesty that she was commonly reported to have bewitched him.

However, he was in honour bound to continue to press the King of France for an explanation, and, on Henri III.'s return from the Bourbonnais, sent to Saint-Germain-en-Laye a second Ambassador, in the person of Agrippa d'Aubigné. But this bluff warrior only succeeded in making matters worse, declaring that his master absolutely refused to receive his wife until the matter was cleared up and justice done. The King, exasperated by his arrogance, replied with threats, to which the Huguenot retorted that "the King of Navarre

[1] Imperial Library, St. Petersburg, published by La Ferrière.

would not sacrifice his honour for his Majesty or any prince living, so long as he had a foot of steel in his hand." And when Catherine, anxious to cast oil upon the troubled waters, promised that the "scoundrels and robbers" who had insulted her daughter should be punished by death, audaciously observed that noble victims were required, "since swine were not sacrificed to Diana." D'Aubigné appears to have narrowly escaped paying dearly for his bravado, for the King's *mignons* laid an ambush for him on his return journey, but, warned by some friends of the Queen of Navarre, he evaded them and reached the Loire in safety.

Nevertheless, Henri III. was anxious to settle this miserable affair, if this could be effected without compromising himself, and, in the middle of October 1583, on the advice of Catherine, despatched Pomponne de Bellièvre,[1] one of his most prudent councillors to Nérac, with a letter, wherein he imperiously commanded his brother-in-law to receive his wife immediately, and declared that he had no satisfaction to give him, since it was his kingly privilege to act as he pleased towards his subjects. At the same time, he begged him not to take the matter so much to heart. "Kings," he wrote, "are often liable to be deceived by false reports, and calumny has not always respected the conduct and morals of even the most virtuous princesses, as, for example, the Queen your mother. You cannot be ignorant of all the evil that was said of her." "His Majesty," remarked the Béarnais ironically to Bellièvre, "does me too much honour by all these letters. In the first,

[1] Born in 1512; Councillor of State 1570; *Surintendant des finances* 1575; Président of the Parlement of Paris 1576. In 1599, Henri IV. appointed him Chancellor.

he calls my wife a wanton, and in the last, tells me that I am the son of one."

Irritated by Henri III.'s refusal of justice, the King of Navarre had already taken up arms and had seized Mont-de-Marsan; while Matignon, the King's lieutenant in Guienne, had retaliated by reinforcing the garrisons of Agen, Condom, Dax, and Bazas. Bellièvre, therefore, came at an inopportune moment, and wrote to Marguerite that "all the words that the King of Navarre addressed to him were complaints." However, another emissary from the Court, Charles de Birague, one of those supple Italians with whom Catherine loved to surround herself, met with more success, and Henri was induced to believe that the attitude taken up by the King of France was that of a man who does not know how to make reparation, but is willing to confess his error. His best friends, too, counselled accommodation, and, at length, he consented to see Bellièvre again, and wrote very kindly to his wife, who was now at Agen, informing her that he did not believe a word of the charge against her, and that he would be perfectly willing to receive her, so soon as he had made it plain to every one that he was not acting under compulsion. "That *ma mie*," he concludes, "is all that I can tell you at present. Were it not for the meddlers who have troubled our affairs, we should have the pleasure of being together at this hour."[1]

But the final solution of the affair was still some distance off, for the King of Navarre reposed but little trust in the pacific intentions of his royal brother-in-law, and until he had received a definite promise that the garrisons which had been placed in the frontier towns should be withdrawn, so that it might not be supposed that he

[1] L'Estoile, *Journal de Henri III.*

was receiving his wife under compulsion, the negotiations made little progress. Pibrac, whom Marguerite, feeling the need of a friend in Paris, had pardoned and received into favour again, exerted himself to the utmost to facilitate matters, and delivered before Henri III. an eloquent harangue, in which he recapitulated all the complaints of the King of Navarre. But the condition of *Monsieur*, who was slowly dying of consumption at Château-Thierry, and whose death would leave Henri of Navarre heir-presumptive to the French throne, did more than anything else to bring about a settlement. Henri III. desired a reconciliation with his brother-in-law, hoping to prevail upon him to embrace the Catholic faith again, and thus avert the troubles which otherwise must inevitably follow the death of Anjou. "I recognise your master as my sole heir," said he to Mornay, who, at the beginning of the spring of 1583, had been sent on a second embassy to the Court of France. "He is a prince of exalted birth and good parts. I have always loved him, and I know that he loves me. He is somewhat choleric and brusque; but good at bottom." [1]

Mornay lost no time in informing his master of his Majesty's words, and urged him strongly to be reconciled to his wife.[2] His wise counsels prevailed, and at the beginning of April 1583, Marguerite, who was still at Agen, received an intimation from her husband that he was prepared to receive her.

[1] *Mémoires de Duplessis-Mornay.*

[2] He added some excellent advice for his Majesty's future conduct. "The eyes of all are fixed on you," he writes; "in your Household some splendour ought to be seen; in your Council, dignity; in your person, gravity; in your serious actions, consistency; in even the least, justice. The love-affairs, which are carried on so openly, and to which you devote so much time, are no longer seasonable. It is time, Sire, for you to make love to all Christendom, and especially to France."

CHAPTER XXI

Reunion of the King and Queen of Navarre—Impressions of Michel de la Huguerye—Difficult position of Marguerite at Nérac—The death of *Monsieur* makes Henri of Navarre heir-presumptive to the throne of France—Mission of the Duc d'Épernon to Gascony—Letter of Bellièvre to Marguerite—The King of Navarre refuses to abjure the Protestant faith—Treaty of Joinville—Henri III., compelled to give the League his countenance and support, signs the Treaty of Nemours—Strained relations between Marguerite and her husband—A secretary of the Queen accused of attempting to poison the King—Marguerite retires to Agen—Letters of Bellièvre to Catherine de' Medici—The Queen of Navarre executes a *coup d'Etat* at Agen and gets possession of the town—She embarks upon a war of conquest, but meets with reverses—The Agenais, exasperated by her exactions and tyranny, appeal to the Maréchal de Matignon for assistance—Revolt of the town and flight of Marguerite to Auvergne.

The reunion between the King and Queen of Navarre took place at Porte-Sainte-Marie, on April 13, 1584. Marguerite was the first to arrive at the rendezvous, where she was soon joined by her husband, who embraced her without saying a word. They then entered the house at which the Queen was staying, mounted to a room on the first floor, and showed themselves, for a few moments, at a window to the people gathered below. Half an hour later, they descended; Marguerite entered her litter, and the King followed her on horseback. "Are you satisfied with me?" inquired Henri, of

Charles de Birague, who had accompanied him to the interview. "I am always satisfied with what is able to please your Majesty," was the diplomatic answer.

Nérac was reached at four o'clock in the afternoon, and until supper-time, the reunited pair promenaded the long gallery of the château. No one overheard what passed between them; but Michel de la Huguerye, a follower of Condé, who had been despatched by that prince on a mission to his cousin, relates that the Queen was "bathed incessantly in tears." The supper which followed was a dismal meal for the unfortunate Marguerite, sitting, with tear-stained face and quivering lips, next her husband, "who," continues the chronicler, "carried on I know not what frivolous conversation with the gentlemen about him, without either he himself or any one else addressing the princess, which caused me to judge that he had received her back under compulsion." And he concludes by expressing his opinion that "this reconciliation would not be of long duration, and that such treatment would cause this princess to take a new part in the trouble which was about to rise." [1]

La Huguerye had gauged the situation but too accurately. Marguerite, who had returned to Nérac as a pledge of peace, resumed nominally her former position; but she did not find there the same consideration nor the same security. The happy days when she had declared the Court of Nérac so pleasant that she had no reason to regret that of France were gone, never to return; nor was it long before she experienced how futile are rehabilitations such as hers. She could not forget the unwillingness of her husband to receive her, the bitter humiliation of those long months which she

[1] *Mémoires de Michel de la Huguerye.*

had spent eating out her heart amid the discomfort and monotony of dull provincial towns, the scorn and mockery of all France. On his side, the King of Navarre, careless and good-natured though he was, where morality was concerned, had been deeply incensed by the odious scandal that had assailed his wife's reputation, by the pressure which had been brought to bear upon him to induce him to reinstate her under the conjugal roof, and by the threats into which his resistance had provoked the French Court. This combination of circumstances constituted a false position, which political and religious complications helped to aggravate.

On June 11, 1584, the Duc d'Anjou expired at Château-Thierry, regretted by none, save his sister and, possibly, by his mother. His death, which deprived Marguerite of her only support, made the King of Navarre heir-presumptive to the French crown, and, as Henri III. had, for some time past, abandoned all hope of his consort bearing him children, the question of the succession at once became of paramount importance. But the accession of a heretic to the throne was repugnant to the whole Catholic population, and was certain to be violently opposed by a considerable section of it. The intimate connection of the State and the orthodox Church was held to be a fundamental law of the monarchy; it was impossible to depart from it without shaking the social edifice to its very foundations, overthrowing all traditions, and outraging the public conscience. Even men of moderate views, who were willing enough that the Huguenots should be tolerated, were alarmed at the prospect of their domination.

Very intelligent, whenever he could contrive to free himself for a time from his idle and voluptuous habits,

Henri III. had foreseen this, and, in the middle of May, that is to say, about three weeks before *Monsieur's* death, had despatched the Duc d'Épernon to the King of Navarre, "bearing him letters, in which he admonished, exhorted, and entreated him, seeing that the life of the Duc d'Anjou, his brother, was despaired of, and that the news of his death was daily expected, to come to Court and go to Mass, because he desired to recognise him as his true heir and successor, and to give him such rank and dignity near his person as his qualification of brother-in-law and heir to the throne deserved. There was a report that he was sent with 200,000 écus, which the King had given him to defray the cost of his journey; and he went accompanied by more than one hundred gentlemen, to the majority of whom the King gave sums of one, two, or three hundred écus, to render him good and faithful service and make a suitable appearance." [1]

Henri of Navarre received the "*demi-roi*" of France and his sumptuous retinue, at Pamiers, with every mark of honour and esteem, to the great satisfaction of Henri III., but to the profound annoyance of Marguerite. The princess could not forget the campaign of calumny which this arrogant *mignon* had carried on against her during her fatal visit to Paris, and, especially, that when she had been forced to submit to her brother's insults at the Louvre, he had been by his master's side. The King of Navarre, after their first interview, had invited the duke to visit him at Nérac; but Marguerite warned her husband that "she intended to absent herself, so as not to disturb the festivities." Advised of her intention, Catherine wrote to her daughter to remonstrate, and charged Bellièvre, who had accompanied d'Épernon

[1] L'Estoile, *Journal de Henri III.*

to Gascony, to transmit her letter, and to use every persuasion to bring the princess to a different frame of mind. The Minister obeyed, and, in despatching her Majesty's letter, wrote as follows :

"BELLIÈVRE *to the* QUEEN OF NAVARRE.

"MADAME,—It is, and will be to me all my life, a cause of extreme regret to write to you on an occasion which is to me, and to all the servants of this crown, so difficult to support. You have lost your brother, whom you loved with a unique affection, but God has preserved your mother, to whom you are dearer than her own life. She has commanded me to submit to you the letter which she has written you concerning your refusal to receive M. d'Épernon. If the King your brother, in sending him, had not commanded him to visit you, it would have appeared to this people that he did not intend you to occupy the place in his affection which all honest men desire him to give you. I write you, by command of your mother, to beg you to conform to her instructions. Give me orders to inform the Duc d'Épernon that you are prepared to give him a cordial reception."[1]

The King of Navarre, too, besought his wife to forget her resentment, "for love of him," and assist at d'Épernon's official reception, to which he attached great importance, and, tired of argument, Marguerite eventually yielded. "Ah well! Monsieur," said she, "since it pleases you to command me, I will remain and will make him welcome, out of the respect and obedience I owe you." But she added : "The day on which he arrives,

[1] Bibliothèque Nationale, *Lettres de Bellièvre*, published by La Ferrière.

and so long as he remains, I shall dress myself in garments which I shall never wear again: those of dissimulation and hypocrisy." She kept her word, and the duke's visit passed off without any unpleasantness, to the great astonishment of the curious, who maliciously scrutinised the countenances of the Queen and her guest.

D'Épernon, however, effected little. The Catholics about Henri of Navarre, and two or three of his more moderate Protestant advisers, had been, for some time past, urging him to remove by his conversion the only obstacle to his recognition as heir-presumptive to the throne. But the great mass of the Huguenots were bitterly opposed to such a recantation, and, lightly though he held by his creed, he felt that the moment had not yet come when he could afford to offend them. He feared, too, the versatility of Henri III., and knew that the Guises' zeal for the Old Faith was but a cloak for their ambition. As a Catholic, he would have only partisans; as chief of the Calvinists, he could command armies of devoted followers. And so d'Épernon was answered with protestations of gratitude and loyalty. The King of Navarre, he was informed, was indeed deeply sensible of his Majesty's goodness, but "a man's religion could not be put on and off like his shirt," and, though he was perfectly willing to receive instruction or to submit to the decision of a free and universal council, he could not see his way to accept the invitation to Court, and, still less, to go straightway to Mass. In other matters, he held himself entirely at his Majesty's orders, and was prepared to come to his assistance with all the forces of his party, in the event of the King breaking with the League.

The fact that the legitimate heir to the throne was a heretic, made the renewal of the civil war inevitable,

and on the death of Anjou, the Guises and the League at once began to organise their forces for the coming struggle. The ultra-Catholic party, who had long lost all confidence in their vacillating sovereign, turned towards Henri de Lorraine, as to their champion and true leader; and the King spoke the truth when he declared that, though he himself wore the crown, it was the Duc de Guise who reigned over the hearts of his subjects. Philip II., fearful that Henri III. might unite with Elizabeth in intervention in the Netherlands, spared no pains in urging the Guisards to take action, and on January 16, 1585, a formal treaty was signed at Joinville, by the Ducs de Guise and de Mayenne, and by representatives of the Cardinal de Bourbon and the King of Spain, whereby it was agreed that, in the event of the death of Henri III., the Cardinal de Bourbon should be proclaimed King, and that the contracting parties should use every endeavour to extirpate heresy in both France and the Netherlands.

No means were left untried by the League to intimidate Henri III. into giving their proceedings his countenance and support. The printing-presses of the capital rained pamphlets, libels, and manifestoes, in which the King was held up to odium as a second Herod, the very incarnation of all the corruption of the age. In spite of his devotion, his pilgrimages, his penances and his confraternities, his orthodoxy was suspected, and the parochial clergy, the friars, and the Jesuits, vied with one another in denouncing him as a traitor to the Faith, a blasphemer, a hypocrite, and an evil liver." [1]

[1] L'Estoile reports that the preachers accused him of leading in his penitential processions "hypocrites and atheists" who, on Good Friday

The Pope gave the League his solemn approval, and, encouraged by this, the confederates, on March 30, 1585, published their manifesto, wherein they declared that they were prepared to draw the sword to restore the dignity and unity of the Church, to secure to the nobility their ancient privileges, to expel unworthy favourites and advisers from the Court, to prevent further troubles by settling the succession, and to provide for regular meetings of the States-General. And until these objects should be attained, they swore to hold together, and persevere, "until they should be heaped together upon one another in the tomb reserved for the last Frenchman fallen in the service of his God and country."

For some weeks, Henri III., exasperated by such insolent defiance of his authority, declined to yield, while the Leaguers occupied several towns, the Press continued to pour forth pamphlets, and a hundred preachers lavished upon him their choicest invective. But, counselled by Catherine, who had not grown less pusillanimous with age,[1] he eventually gave way, and, on July 15, 1585, signed the Treaty of Nemours, which marked the triumph of the Guises and the "Holy Union," and was, for himself, a virtual abdication.[2]

1582, had partaken of a hearty meal, to refresh themselves after their exertions. He was also accused of indulging in blasphemous remarks concerning an image of Our Lord, and of visiting convents, in order to make love to the nuns.

[1] Catherine seems to have made up her mind that Henri III. would not live long, and that she would survive him, though in the latter expectation she was disappointed. In the event of his death, it would appear to have been her intention to support the claim of the Marquis de Pont-à-Moussin, son of the Duke of Lorraine and her daughter Claude, and to govern through him.

[2] By the Treaty of Nemours, Henri III. interdicted throughout his

While these momentous events were happening, the position of Marguerite at Nérac was becoming increasingly difficult. She had derived no advantage from her surrender to her husband's wishes on the occasion of d'Épernon's visit, and continued to remain isolated in the midst of a Court, of which she was Queen only in name. So long as his wife had been of use to him in his political schemes, the King of Navarre had shown her at least those outward marks of respect and consideration to which her rank entitled her. But now she had lost her credit, and could no longer serve as an intermediary between him and the French Court; nay, more, he had come to regard her in the light of a possible rival, for there was a party in the nation, which, too orthodox to accept a heretic sovereign and, on the other hand, too fervently Royalist to desire a change of dynasty, meditated, in the event of Henri III.'s death, putting Marguerite forward as claimant to the throne, in defiance of the Salic Law.[1]

In consequence, Henri began to neglect her entirely,

realm any other religion save the Catholic, on pain of death, and enjoined the same penalty on all Protestant ministers who should not quit the country within one month, while all other Huguenots were to abjure within six. War was to be declared on all those who, at the expiration of this period, had not made their submission, and the conduct of the war entrusted to the chiefs of the League. It is said that when the King of Navarre learned that Henri III. had surrendered to the League, he remained for a long while in thought, with his chin resting on his hand, and that when at last he roused himself from his reverie, his beard had turned grey.

[1] M. de Saint-Poncy, who, however, does not give his authority, asserts that, previous to her forced reconciliation with her husband, Philip II. had offered Marguerite an asylum in Spain, with the intention of supporting her claim to the throne. But it seems scarcely probable that Philip, whose daughters by Élisabeth de Valois, the Infanta Isabella, had, if the Salic Law were to be violated, superior claims to Marguerite's, would have looked further for a candidate.

passing nearly all his time at Pau with the Comtesse de Gramont, and paying only brief and infrequent visits to Nérac. *La belle* Corisande, too, seems to have lost no opportunity of sowing dissension between the royal pair, and the breach grew wider and wider.

At length matters came to such a pass that each party believed, or affected to believe, that the other cherished the most sinister designs, and was only awaiting a favourable opportunity to put them into execution. Marguerite imagined that she had everything to fear from the ascendency of the Comtesse de Gramont, and declared that there was a plot to carry her off and retain her captive at Pau. On his side, Henri caused a man named Ferrand, who was, or had been until very recently, one of the Queen's secretaries, to be arrested, on a charge of attempting to poison him,[1] though it subsequently transpired that he had done nothing worse than carry on a very active propaganda on behalf of the Guises. Nevertheless, before his innocence of the criminal charge was established, Henri, urged on by the Comtesse de Gramont, seems to have seriously contemplated repudiating his wife, on the ground that she had been an accomplice of Ferrand, and took the advice of his Council on the matter. If we are to believe d'Aubigné, he went even further than this, and deliberated whether she could not be brought to trial and executed. D'Aubigné takes great credit to himself for having dissuaded the King from such a step, having regard to the hostility which had always existed between him and the Queen.

[1] An attempt to poison Henri had certainly been made about this time. Under date March 6, 1585, the Austrian Ambassador, Busbecq, writes to his Court: "A villain has endeavoured to poison the King of Navarre; but either because the poison was not sufficiently virulent, or because the prince's constitution was too strong, the venom did not take effect. The wretch attempted to kill himself with a pistol."

An open rupture between the ill-assorted couple was now inevitable; and Marguerite determined to quit Nérac, which had become as intolerable to her as it had once been agreeable, and to seek an asylum in the estates of her appanage which bordered on the dominions of her husband. It was her intention to maintain herself there, with the support of the League, as a kind of independent sovereign, and set both her husband and her brother at defiance. Accordingly, about the middle of March, she requested the King of Navarre's permission to spend Holy Week at Agen. Suspecting nothing and glad of a momentary truce, Henri readily consented. "That is a good plan, *ma mie*," said he, ironically "Go and pray to God for me."

Agen, it will be remembered, was the town in which Marguerite had spent the latter part of the time between her banishment from the French Court and her return to Nérac. During her stay, she had made herself very popular with the inhabitants, the great majority of whom were zealous Catholics, by her liberality, and still more by having obtained the removal of the governor, a certain d'Oraison, who held the town for Henri III., and had used his position to rob and oppress the citizens.

Without being a stronghold, Agen was far from an easy place to invest, being protected, on the South, by the Garonne, and, on the East, by ravines, and defended by stout mediæval ramparts and towers, and by earthworks and gabions at its more exposed points. Moreover, since the withdrawal of d'Oraison and his troops, the townspeople, who lived in constant dread of being surprised by the King of Navarre, had formed themselves into a civic guard, and made every preparation for a vigorous defence.[1]

[1] M. Charles Merki, *La Reine Margot et la fin des Valois*, p. 319.

Marguerite arrived at Agen on March 19, 1585, accompanied by a few of her ladies and two or three gentlemen of her suite, and took up her residence at the house of a wealthy widow named Camberfort, whose husband had been one of the principal citizens. The rest of her Household joined her the same evening, and on the morrow and following days, the Catholic gentry of the neighbourhood flocked into the town, with the result that the Queen soon found herself surrounded by a little Court.

Her arrival excited no surprise among the good folk of Agen, for the ill-feeling between her and the King of Navarre was common knowledge, and they thought it only natural that she should desire to escape from a husband who was not only a heretic, but a notorious evil-liver. Marguerite, too, was popular; she was very regular in the performance of her devotions, distributed alms with a lavish hand, spent money freely, and seemed likely to make their town quite a gay and fashionable resort. They welcomed her with open arms.

The French Court, at first, was under the impression that the Queen of Navarre's retirement to Agen was merely a measure of precaution, due to the fear with which the influence of the Comtesse de Gramont had inspired her, and Bellièvre was of the same opinion. "I have not failed to speak to M. de Clervant," he writes to Catherine, on April 18," of the wrong that the King of Navarre is committing in preferring the friendship of the countess [de Gramont] to that of his wife, who has been constrained to return to Agen, to protect herself from the countess, who is plotting against her life." But, some days later, he began to grow suspicious, and

wrote again, advising the Queen-Mother to beg the Duke of Lorraine to dissuade the Guises from lending assistance to the Queen of Navarre in a war which, he very much feared, she was about to undertake contrary to the wishes of the King.[1]

This warning, however, came too late, for Marguerite had already despatched her secretary, Choisnin, with a letter and secret instructions for the Duc de Guise. Choisnin gave the duke the letter, but kept the instructions, which, as we shall see, he made use of later.

For some weeks, nothing of importance occurred at Agen. Marguerite continued to win golden opinions from the townspeople by her piety, liberality, and charming manners; and when she represented to the consuls that she desired to form a guard, in order to secure her person against any attempt on the part of the King of Navarre, they allowed her to organise two companies of men-at-arms, which she placed under the command of two of her most devoted followers, the Sieurs d'Aubiac and Ligardes. Her party, too, was being constantly augmented by the arrival of Catholic gentlemen and their retainers from the surrounding country, and by the middle of May, she found herself strong enough to attempt the *coup d'état* she had long been meditating.

On May 15, she convoked, at the episcopal palace, a meeting, at which were present the bishop, the prior of the Convent of Saint-Caprasy, the consuls, the officers of the civic guard, and all the principal citizens, and informed them that the Maréchal de Matignon, the King's lieutenant in Guienne, was conspiring against

[1] Bibliothèque Nationale, *Lettres de Bellièvre*, published by La Ferrière.

MARGUERITE DE VALOIS, QUEEN OF FRANCE AND NAVARRE

("QUEEN MARGOT")

From an Engraving by MERCER *after the Painting by* VINCENT

MARGUERITE
DE FRANCE
FEMME DE HENRI IV.
FILLE DE HENRI II.

her; that she had much to fear from the enmity of her husband, and that, as war was on the point of breaking out, she must request them to hand over to her the keys of the town and the citadel.

The consuls feebly protested, declaring that the town was strong enough to defend itself, and that the Queen was in perfect security. But Marguerite rejoined that she was the mistress of the district; that the Agenais was her appanage, and that she intended to govern it henceforth as she deemed necessary. The citizens gazed at one another in dismay; but a glance out of the window revealed the fact that the square in front of the palace was full of soldiers, and that her Majesty intended to resort to force, if persuasion failed. They, therefore, decided to yield, handed over the keys, and took the oath of fealty, which Marguerite caused to be administered to them before they separated. The rest of the townspeople, intimidated or indifferent, offered no opposition, and the Queen's authority was established without any disturbance. Once mistress of the town, Marguerite immediately replaced the civic guard by her own troops. Her partisans flocked to her from all sides, and in a few days she had quite a little army assembled in and around Agen. Among those who came to offer her their services was Lignerac,[1] Governor of Aurillac and Bailiff of Upper Auvergne, who arrived at the head of a body of cavalry which he had raised in Quercy. To him the Queen of Navarre entrusted the command of

[1] François Robert de Lignerac, Seigneur de Pleaux. He was a warm partisan of the League, and during the siege of La Fère, in 1596, was charged by Mayenne to carry his proposals to Henri IV. He made his peace with the King at the Treaty of Folembray and served him with distinction.

her troops, while the Vicomte de Du Ras, husband of the confidante whom Henri III. had compelled her to dismiss from her service, was charged with the conduct of political matters. Nor was it long before his wife arrived upon the scene, accompanied by her friend, Madame de Béthune, and at once proceeded to assume the position of Prime Minister to her royal mistress.

Henri III. and the Queen-Mother were furious when news of Marguerite's escapade reached them. I perceive," wrote Catherine, " that God has left me this creature for the punishment of my sins, by the afflictions, which every day she occasions me; she is my scourge in this world. I assure you that I am so afflicted that I know what remedy to seek." [1] Henri III., on his side, sent orders to Matignon to make war upon his adventurous sister and ravage her possessions; but the marshal preferred to stir up disaffection among her partisans before having recourse to arms.

The King of Navarre, on the other hand, is reported to have been much amused at his consort's proceedings, and made jokes about her with the Comtesse de Gramont. Nevertheless, he was fully alive to the danger of allowing her a free hand in the Agenais and surrounding districts, and he determined to crush her before she had time to become really formidable.

Meanwhile, Marguerite, far from satisfied with her easy success at Agen, had embarked upon a war of conquest. She had decided, that, in order to secure her independence, she must compel not only Agen but the whole of the Agenais and the Armagnac to acknowledge her authority. But outside Agen, the Huguenots predominated, and were very far from inclined to tamely

[2] Catherine to Bellièvre, June 15, 1585.

submit to her rule; and the success of her campaign did not answer her expectations.

At first, however, Fortune seemed to favour her arms. In July, she surprised Tonneins, a town situated on the Garonne, and placed a garrison there. But her success was short-lived; for her husband promptly marched upon the town, and drove out the Queen's troops, with heavy loss.

Impatient to repair this check, Marguerite made an attempt upon Villeneuve-d'Agen, leading her troops in person, if we are to believe Mézeray. This town was divided into two parts by the River Lot. The Queen's forces succeeded in occupying that situated on the left bank, but deferred their assault on the rest of the town till the following day. At daybreak, the citizens sent out a number of men furnished with trumpets, who posted themselves on the Périgord road and rent the air with martial strains. The besiegers, in the belief that the King of Navarre was advancing to the succour of the town—a report to that effect had already been spread by some men who had joined them during the night, representing themselves to be deserters—immediately evacuated the part already in their hands and retreated in confusion to Agen, harassed all the way by the townspeople, who had sallied out in pursuit.

Attempts upon Valence d'Agen and Saint-Mazard, a small town of the Armagnac, met with no better success; while three companies of men-at-arms, who, on the advice of Duras, had been sent into Béarn to foment a rising in the Queen's favour, were attacked by Henri of Navarre and annihilated.

Disheartened by these reverses and fearing to be herself attacked, either by her husband or by Matignon, or possibly

by both in conjunction, since they had, for the nonce, laid aside their own quarrels, in order to checkmate the adventurous princess, Marguerite, towards the end of August, reluctantly abandoned aggressive warfare, and shut herself up in Agen, there to await the assistance she was expecting from the League. But of the six months' respite granted the Huguenots by the Treaty of Nemours only one had passed, and until the full term had expired, the Leaguers were very unlikely to take the field. The question was whether she could maintain herself at Agen until the inevitable war began, and the Guises were at liberty to come to her aid. Unfortunately for Marguerite, it was not men so much as money of which she stood in need. The garrison, strong and ably commanded, was quite capable of defending the town for some months, even against the combined forces of the King of Navarre and Matignon. But she sadly needed money, to pay the soldiers and for the expenses of her Court, which her accounts for the year 1585 show numbered no less than 235 persons, exclusive of the pages.[1] Money had been promised by Spain, but it did not arrive, and it was to no purpose that the Duc de Guise entreated Philip II. to send assistance to the Queen without delay, "in order that she whom we have established as an obstacle to her husband, may not be abandoned by her people."[2] Philip was evidently of opinion that, in granting the League a subsidy of a million crowns he had done enough for one year.

At her wits' end for money, Marguerite was ill-advised enough to listen to the counsels of her intimates, of whom Madame de Duras was the guiding spirit, and levy addi-

[1] M. Charles Merki, *La Reine Margot et la fin des Valois*, p. 328.

[2] Archives Nationales, published by La Ferrière.

tional taxes on the townspeople. This aroused great irritation amongst all classes, which was increased by the drastic measures adopted to enforce payment, those who refused to contribute what was demanded being punished by having soldiers billeted on them, imprisonment, or the sale of their goods. The plague, which that year ravaged nearly the whole of the South of France, broke out at Agen, and destroyed in six months over fifteen hundred persons. A number of the wealthier citizens entreated the Queen to permit them to depart with their families from the stricken town; but this permission was refused them, at the instigation of Marguerite's advisers, who pointed out that the withdrawal of so many of the principal citizens would materially weaken her cause. But the exasperation of the Agenais reached its height, when the Queen determined to build a second citadel overlooking the Garonne, in order to strengthen the defences of the town and, at the same time, to enable her to defend herself against her subjects, should occasion arise. For this purpose, she forthwith began to demolish a number of the best houses in the town, and in a few days upwards of fifty were levelled with the ground, vague promises of compensation at some future time being all that their luckless owners received in return for the destruction of their homes.

Ruined, plundered, and oppressed, the citizens sighed for their former liberty, and turned willing ears to the agents of Matignon, who had been busily intriguing in the town for some time past. In response to a deputation which waited upon him at Bordeaux, the marshal sent a curious document, which is still preserved in the Archives of Agen, authorising the citizens "to capture and seize the forts, drive out and expel, by force of arms,

if necessary, the captains, soldiers, and all men of war who were there, and give him admission to the town, to hold it in obedience to his Majesty." And the document concludes with an injunction, which sounds somewhat ironical under the circumstances, that in everything they might do, they should " treat the Queen of Navarre, her ladies, and maids-of-honour with the honour, respect, and very humble service which was their due."

In the early morning of September 25, the citizens rose in arms, seized one of the gates, and admitted a strong force, which Matignon (who, mindful of the fate of his predecessor, Biron, sacrificed to the Queen of Navarre's resentment, did not care to appear personally in the affair) had despatched to their assistance, under the command of one of his officers, Étienne de Nort. The garrison, surprised and outnumbered, fought bravely enough, but were eventually overpowered, and scattered in all directions, pursued by the infuriated townspeople. Marguerite herself escaped capture, thanks to Lignerac, who, seeing that all was lost, hastened to her house and compelled her to mount behind him, while one of his officers carried off Madame de Duras in similar fashion. They were accompanied by a part of the Queen's *entourage*, about eighty gentlemen, and a body of Lignerac's men-at-arms, and made their way out of the town without encountering any opposition.

It had been arranged that, in the event of the Queen of Navarre being compelled to quit Agen, she should make her way into the viscounty of Carlat—in Upper Auvergne—which formed, like the Agenais, part of her appanage, and seek safety at the Château of Carlat, which was then held by a brother of Lignerac, Robert Gilbert, Seigneur de Marses or Marcé. Thither the fugitives

directed their course, though not with the extraordinary precipitation described by some chroniclers, since Marguerite's account-books show that they occupied six days in covering a distance of some forty leagues.

However, the journey was not altogether uneventful, as, some distance from Agen, they found their progress barred by a strong body of arquebusiers, whom Matignon had placed there to intercept them; and it was only after a sharp skirmish, in which several men fell, that they succeeded in cutting their way through. On the frontier of Auvergne, between Entragues and Montsalvy, the Queen was met by Gilbert de Marses, at the head of five hundred gentlemen and men-at-arms, who escorted her to Carlat, where she arrived on Monday, September 30, 1585.

CHAPTER XXII

Marguerite at the Château of Carlat—Dishonesty and insolence of her secretary, Choisnin, whom she dismisses from her service—In revenge, he reveals to Henri III. her negotiations with the Duc de Guise—Illness of the Queen of Navarre—Her situation at Carlat little better than that of a prisoner—Her relations with d'Aubiac—A tragic episode in her Majesty's bed-chamber—Marguerite, finding herself no longer in security at Carlat, removes to the Château of Ibois—She is arrested by the Marquis de Canillac, acting under the orders of Henri III. —Letters of the King to Villeroy—Execution of d'Aubiac—Canillac conducts Marguerite to the Château of Usson, where she "makes her gaoler her captive"—Sinister designs attributed to Henri III. and Catherine in regard to the Queen of Navarre —Canillac joins the League and delivers the château to Marguerite—Her life at Usson—Her *Mémoires*—Her financial embarrassments.

The Château of Carlat was one of the most ancient fortresses in France, and traced its history back to the time of Clovis, who, according to a local tradition, had once vainly besieged it. It was of immense size and strength, situated on a plateau environed by precipices, which, says the author of the *Divorce satyrique*, "gave it more the appearance of a robber's den than the residence of a Queen." Several illustrious personages had at different periods in its history resided there, among them, Jacques d'Armagnac, Duc de Nemours, executed for high treason under Louis XI., the Duchesse Anne de Beaujeu, and Susanne de Montpensier, her daughter.

The château was nominally Marguerite's property, but during the Wars of Religion it seems to have been occupied by whoever was strong enough to seize and defend it. Thus, shortly before the Queen of Navarre's arrival in Auvergne, it had been held by a Huguenot chief, a certain La Peyre-Teule, who had been expelled by Gilbert de Marses, acting presumably under Marguerite's orders. The princess had decided to take refuge at Carlat, because it was situated in her appanage, and she counted on the assistance of the Catholic gentry of the province. A movement in her favour was successful, and she entered Carlat as a sovereign.

If we are to believe the pamphleteers of the time, and the writers who have followed them, Marguerite arrived at Carlat, "without her State bed, without money, and without even a change of linen," [1] and despatched Duras into Spain, to solicit help from Philip II. But although, in her hurried flight from Agen, she had been compelled to leave behind her the greater part of her Household, together with all her coaches, litters, furniture, jewellery, plate, and so forth, the Agenais made no attempt to detain either her servants or her property, and her account-books for 1585 show that by December 4, everything had arrived—even the State bed.[2]

Her treasurer, Charpentier, and her comptroller, François Rousselet, were among the last of her Household to reach Carlat, and, during their absence, their duties were discharged by the secretary, Choisnin, whom, it will be remembered, Marguerite had despatched to the

[1] *Divorce satyrique.*

[2] An entry shows that the Queen paid 24 écus to the Sieur Victor, who had brought it from Miossac to Carlat.

Duc de Guise, shortly after her arrival at Agen, and who had kept the secret instructions which his mistress had given him for the duke. When, at length, the treasurer and comptroller put in an appearance, Choisnin presented his accounts and declared that he had disbursed on behalf of the Queen and her Household between 14,000 and 15,000 écus in six weeks! Marguerite was highly indignant, as well she might be, and her anger was increased when the unabashed Choisnin demanded an exorbitant sum for his services. The Queen flatly refused to pay it, upon which Choisnin behaved in a most offensive manner, and addressed to his mistress a pasquinade, "the most disgusting and villainous that ever was seen." For this, he was dismissed from her service and expelled from the château, after first receiving a sound flogging at the hands of some of her gentlemen. He departed, "vowing to leave nothing undone to ruin the Queen," and was as good as his word, since he set off for Paris, and placed the secret instructions for Guise in the hands of Henri III.

Marguerite was, for the time being, in safety at Carlat, but she was sadly in need of money. She endeavoured to procure a loan from a Florentine banker, who had a banking-house at Lyons, on the security of a portion of her jewellery; but the Italian shamefully abused her confidence. She subsequently parted with some valuable jewels to Lignerac, to cover an advance of 10,000 livres which he had made her.

Early in the spring of 1586, she fell ill, and her malady would appear to have caused her people considerable anxiety, since she was attended by doctors from Moulins, Aurillac, Villefranche-en-Rouergue, and Murat, as well as by her own physicians. In May, however, she had

recovered, and was able to visit several of the neighbouring nobility and to attend a mountaineers' fête, organised by Lignerac in her honour.

Meanwhile, she had made numerous changes in her Household, and had taken several of the gentry of Auvergne into her service. She had also quarrelled with the Vicomte de Duras, who had departed in high dudgeon. The cause of their quarrel is uncertain, but, very probably, Duras had taken exception to the position in which the Queen had allowed herself to be placed, for, though treated ostensibly as a sovereign, she was, to all intents and purposes, a prisoner in the hands of Lignerac and Marses. The former had been appointed Superintendent of the Queen's Household, while the latter commanded in the château, and without their consent and that of another adventurous noble, Jean de Rive or de Rieu, civil and criminal lieutenant of the district, she did nothing, and was merely the instrument of their ambition.

Marguerite had, however, bestowed her friendship and confidence, if not her love, on a fourth person, a young man named d'Aubiac, who, as we have mentioned, had been given the command of one of the companies of men-at-arms which she had organised at Agen, and with whose assistance she had secured possession of the town. Who this person really was is a matter of dispute. According to one account, he was a certain Jean de Larte de Galart, second son of Antoine de Galart, Seigneur d'Aubiac; while M. de Saint-Poncy asserts that he was a son of Bégot de Roquemaurel, Seigneur d'Aubiat, a member of one of the oldest and most illustrious families of Auvergne, and a relative of the Duc d'Albany, uncle of Catherine de' Medici. There is a similar difference of

opinion as to his personal appearance; for, whereas the *Divorce satyrique* describes him as having "red hair, freckled skin, and a rubicund nose," the Tuscan Ambassador, Cavriana, speaks of him as "young and handsome," though audacious and indiscreet.[1]

Whatever his social position and appearance may have been, he seems to have fallen violently in love with the Queen of Navarre, though the author is probably romancing when he declares that, on beholding her for the first time, at Agen, the enamoured young man exclaimed: "Ah! the admirable creature! If I were fortunate enough to find favour in her eyes, I should not regret my life, were I to lose it an hour afterwards!" These words, the writer tells us, were reported to Marguerite, who, far from being offended at them, gave him the command of one of the companies of men-at-arms, and subsequently made him her equerry. Whether he was her lover, as several writers assert, is difficult to say—M. de Saint-Poncy, of course, will not allow that he was anything but a humble worshipper—but, any way, he was one of the most devoted of her partisans at this period, and enjoyed her full confidence.

In the early autumn of 1586, the situation of the Queen of Navarre at Carlat began to grow very unpleasant. The commandant of the château, Gilbert de Marses, died,[2] and violent and acrimonious disputes immediately

[1] *Négociations avec la Toscane*, iv. 669.

[2] The *Divorce satyrique* accuses Marguerite of having caused Marses to be poisoned, partly in order to revenge herself on his wife, who had discovered the nature of the relations existing between her and d'Aubiac, and partly to make herself mistress of the château. But no attention need be paid to so foul an accusation made by a writer of this class, and, in all probability, Marses fell a victim to the plague, which was then ravaging Auvergne.

began between d'Aubiac and Lignerac on the subject of the military authority. Then a most tragic event occurred. Lignerac, who, it would appear, possessed or, at any rate, aspired to the Queen's favours, took umbrage at the interest which she was taking in "the son of her apothecary," and finding him one morning in her Majesty's chamber, was seized with so violent an access of jealousy, that he poniarded the hapless youth to death before the eyes of the horrified princess.[1]

Apart from these annoyances, Margueite no longer felt herself in security at Carlat. Henri III., more than ever incensed against her by the proofs of her dealings with the Guises which the treacherous Choisnin had placed in his hands, had sent orders to her to leave the château, threatening her, in case of refusal, with "the most rigorous punishment"; and the arrival of Joyeuse, at the head of a Royalist army, on the frontier of Auvergne had caused many of her supporters among the Catholic gentry of the province to desert her cause. She seems, indeed, to have been in hourly dread lest the château should be attacked and taken, and she herself delivered over to her detested brother. Accordingly, she resolved to leave Carlat, and take refuge at the Château of Ibois, a league from Issoire, in which Catherine had offered her an asylum, shortly after her flight from Agen. Thither she set out on October 14, 1586, accompanied by d'Aubiac, Robert du Cambon, another of Lignerac's brothers, and a part of her Household. A certain Seigneur de Château-

[1] M. de Saint-Poncy characterises this episode as an "atrociously ridiculous story." But it was sufficiently well authenticated for the Spanish Ambassador, Mendoza, to report it to Philip II., in a letter which is preserved in the Archives Nationales, and has been published by M. Philippe Lauzun in his *Itinéraire raisonné de Marguerite de Valois en Gascogne.*

neuf, whom she had admitted to her confidence, had promised to convey the Queen and her suite across the Allier, and to furnish her with an escort as far as Ibois. But he failed to keep his promise, and the party had to cross the river by a ford, where Marguerite had a very narrow escape of being drowned. They reached Ibois in safety on October 16, and were duly admitted by the governor of the château, Louis de la Souchère. Scarcely, however, had they arrived, when a troop of horse was observed approaching. It proved to be commanded by the Marquis de Canillac, Governor of the Château of Usson, and one of Joyeuse's lieutenants.[1] Châteauneuf had betrayed them!

Canillac peremptorily demanded admission to the château, and the Queen, recognising the futility of resistance, ordered the gates to be opened, having first concealed d'Aubiac, in the chimney, according to Du Vair, or "between the walls," according to an unpublished manuscript cited by M. Charles Merki. The marquis informed Marguerite that he had orders from the King to arrest her, and then demanded the whereabouts of d'Aubiac, concerning whom, it appeared, he had special instructions. Her Majesty's reply not being satisfactory, he ordered a search to be made, and the hapless d'Aubiac's hiding-place was speedily discovered.

The same day, Canillac despatched a gentleman to Henri III., to inform him of his sister's arrest, and to ask for further instructions. In reply, his Majesty wrote to Villeroy as follows:

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[1] Jean Timoléon de Beaufort-Montboissier, Vicomte de Lamothe, Marquis de Canillac. He was the son of Marguerite's *gouvernante* and *dame d'honneur*, Madame de Curton, by her first marriage with Jacques de Beaufort, Marquis de Canillac.

HENRI III. *to* VILLEROY.

"Tell Canillac not to budge until we have made the necessary arrangements. Let him convey her to the Château of Usson. Let, from this hour, her estates and pensions be sequestrated, in order to reimburse the marquis for his charge of her. As for her women and male attendants, let the marquis dismiss them instantly, and let him give her some honest demoiselle and waiting-woman, until the Queen my good mother orders him to procure such women as she shall think suitable. But, above all, let him take good care of her. It is my intention to refer to her in the letters patent, only as 'my sister,' and not as 'dear and well-beloved.' The Queen my mother enjoins upon me *to cause d'Aubiac to be hanged*, and that the execution takes place in the presence of this wretched woman, in the court of the Château of Usson. Arrange for this to be properly carried out. Give orders that all her rings be sent to me, and with a full inventory, and that they be brought to me as soon as possible."

This letter was followed by another not less severe in tone.

HENRI III. *to* VILLEROY.

"The more I examine the matter, the more I feel and recognise the ignominy that this wretched woman brings upon us. The best that God can do for her and for us, is to take her away. I have written to the Marquis de Canillac concerning her women; that he leaves her two waiting-women and her maids-of-honour; since I judged them to be better able to endure captivity than those who have not deserved it. As for this Aubiac,

although he merits death, both in the eyes of God and men, it would be well for some judges to conduct his trial, in order that we may have always before us what will serve to repress her [Marguerite's] audacity, for she will always be too proud and malignant. Decide what ought to be done, for death, we are all resolved, must follow. Tell the marquis not to budge until I have furnished him with Swiss and other troops." [1]

In conformity with the King's orders, d'Aubiac was taken to Aiguepecse, and there, after a mockery of a trial, hanged on the Place Saint-Louis, "kissing until the last moment of his existence," according to the *Divorce satyrique*, "a blue cut-velvet sleeve," all that remained to him of the favours of his beloved mistress. A grave had been dug beneath the gibbet, and, while still breathing, the hapless young man was cut down and flung into it. [2]

On what charge he had been condemned is unknown. Some writers pretend that he had been concerned in the death of Gilbert de Marses; but, whatever may have been the charge, there can be little doubt that what M. de Saint-Poncy calls the "tender sympathy" which existed between him and Marguerite was the real cause of his terrible fate.[3]

As for the Queen of Navarre, Canillac conducted her, by way of Saint-Amant and Saint-Saturnin, to the Château of Usson, where she arrived on November 13, 1586.

Like Carlat, Usson formed part of Marguerite's appanage. The Château was situated on the summit of

[1] Imperial Library, St. Petersburg, published by La Ferrière.

[2] *Négociations avec la Toscane*, iv. 669.

[3] M. de Saint-Poncy says that Marguerite composed some stanzas "to consecrate and avenge the memory of this touching figure, who, in the Middle Ages, would have inspired the songs of troubadours."

an inaccessible rock, at the foot of which nestled a tiny village, and had been built, according to an old legend, with the materials of a pagan temple. Purchased by the Duc de Berry from Jean II., Comte d'Auvergne, Usson had passed to Charles VI. and his successors. Louis XI. had used it as a kind of State prison, "keeping his prisoners a hundred times more securely there," says Brantôme, "than at Loches, Vincennes, or Lusignan."

Marguerite was at first very unhappy at Usson, "treated," writes the Tuscan Ambassador, Cavriana, "like the poorest and most abandoned of creatures." However, this state of things did not last long. M. de Saint-Poncy indignantly denies that his heroine employed her wiles to transform her gaoler into her prisoner, and seduce him from his allegiance to the King. But this "fable" as he characterises it, does not rest upon the testimony of the *Divorce satyrique* [1] and other works of a similar character, but is supported by two of the Queen of Navarre's most enthusiastic panegyrists, Père Hilarion de Coste and Brantôme. "The Marquis de Canillac," writes the former, "carried her (Marguerite) off, and brought her to Usson. But, soon afterwards, this lord of a very illustrious house saw himself the captive of his prisoner. He thought to have triumphed over her, and the mere sight of her ivory arms triumphed over him, and henceforth he lived only by the favour of the victorious eyes of his beautiful captive." [1] And

[1] "Her manners—it is Henri IV. who is supposed to be speaking—were so insinuating that it was difficult to defend oneself when she chose to exert them. She made so many advances to Canillac that he could not avoid becoming aware of them; he preferred a fleeting gratification to the duty he owed his master, and suffered himself to become enslaved by her whom he had captured."

[1] *Éloge des hommes et dames illustres au XVI^e. et XVII^e. siècles:* Paris 1625.

Brantôme says: "Poor man! What could he do? To wish to keep prisoner her who, by the power of her eyes and her beautiful face, could rivet her chains upon the rest of the world, as though they had been galley-slaves!"

It is probable, however, that interest had at least as much to do with the subjugation of Canillac as had love. In guarding Marguerite for the King, he might naturally expect some substantial recompense; but Henri III.'s sceptre was rapidly slipping from his grasp; his authority was becoming each day more feeble; and the marquis decided that the League might prove a better paymaster. He, accordingly, entered into communication with the Guises, and submitted to them a memoir, in which he informed them that Henri III. and the Queen-Mother, in order to checkmate the designs of the League, had agreed to cause Marguerite to be assassinated, and to marry the King of Navarre to Christine, daughter of the Duke of Lorraine.

It seems difficult to believe that Henri III. and Catherine, unscrupulous though they both undoubtedly were, could ever have seriously contemplated so monstrous a crime; but that such a design was credited to them by well-informed persons is evident from the following letter, which the Duc de Guise addressed to Mendoza, after terms had been arranged between him and Canillac.

THE DUC DE GUISE *to* DON BERNARDINO MENDOZA.

"February 14, 1587.

"I do not intend to fail to advise you that the negotiations begun by me with the Marquis de Canillac have happily succeeded, and I have persuaded him to cast in his lot with our party, and, by this means, assure the

person of the Queen of Navarre, who is now in full security. And I rejoice at this, as much on her account as for the acquisition that it has brought us, of a very great number of places and châteaux, which renders the Auvergne country perfectly assured to us, and *frustrates the tragic designs they are founding on her death, the details of which will cause your hair to stand up.* You can understand how this matter has affected the King of France, seeing that the Marquis has dismissed the garrison which his Majesty had placed there, which is the first proof of his good faith that I demanded of him." [1]

Canillac, in fact, had dismissed the Swiss, whom Henri III. had placed at Usson, to guard his sister, and perhaps with a more sinister intention, after which he handed over the fortress to Marguerite.[2] It would appear, however, that the princess was obliged to purchase her château and her liberty, and at a very high price, too, since, in the Library of Clermont-Ferrand, a deed is preserved, wherein the Queen of Navarre, "in consideration of the very signal and very acceptable services which she has received and hopes to receive from Jean de Beaufort, Marquis de Canillac, gives, cedes, and transfers to him and his all the rights that she may possess over the county of Auvergne and other estates

[1] Archives Nationales, coll. Simancas, published by M. Charles Merki. And the Tuscan Ambassador, Cavriana, wrote to his Court: "The King intends to cause his sister to be put to death and to re-marry the King of Navarre."

[2] There appears to be no truth in the story that the Queen of Navarre profited by the absence of Canillac at Lyons, whither he had gone to negotiate with the Guises, to seize the château, with the assistance of a body of Leaguers from Orléans, though it is accepted by M. de la Ferrière, who has a weakness for the picturesque.

and lordships in the said county of Auvergne . . . also the sum of 40,000 écus, payable as soon as it will be possible to discharge it . . . and the first vacant benefices in our estates up to the annual value of 30,000 livres." [1]

This document is dated September 1588, but M. Merki is of opinion that it was intended to replace, or perhaps supplement, some previous donation of the princess in favour of Canillac. The marquis, however, did not live to enjoy the reward of his "very signal and very acceptable services," as, in April of the following year, he was killed while directing the artillery of the Leaguers at the siege of Saint-Ouen.

Marguerite was now once more a free woman; but she prudently decided to remain at Usson, whither Guise had sent a body of troops from Orléans for her protection, and view in safety from its inaccessible rock the sanguinary drama which was being enacted around her. Here, she learned of the Huguenot victory at Coutras, when the Duc de Joyeuse was killed; of the Day of the Barricades and the ignominious flight of the King from his capital; of the assassination of Guise, by her brother's myrmidons, that dark December morning at Blois; of the death of Catherine (January 5, 1589) whom Henri III. had persuaded to disinherit her daughter in favour of Charles de Valois, the natural son of Charles IX. and Marie Touchet; of the death of her most bitter enemy beneath the poniard of Jacques Clément, and of the heroic struggle her husband was making against the forces of intolerance and anarchy.

Of Marguerite's life at Usson but little authentic information is, unfortunately, forthcoming, and, in

[1] Published by M. Charles Merki, *La Reine Margot et la fin des Valois*, p. 357.

consequence numerous legends have gathered around it. If we are to listen to Père Hilarion de Coste, it was "a Tabor for devotion, a Libya for retirement, an Olympus for the arts, a Parnassus for the Muses, a Caucasus for the afflictions." "Usson," continues the good Father, "Usson! crowned by the royal castle, sacred and holy abode! Sweet hermitage, where Majesty meditated. Thou rock, thou art a witness of the voluntary seclusion of thy peerless princess Marguerite! Usson! earthly paradise of delights, where sweet and harmonious voices combine to soothe—the only spot where Royalty enjoyed the repose and contentment which blessed souls find in another world!" [1] Mongez compares it to Noah's Ark, a sacred temple and a devout monastery; [2] while a third writer describes it as "the honour and wonder of Auvergne." [3]

If, on the other hand, we are to credit her detractors, it was "a Cythera for her amours," [4] the counterpart of the Capri of Tiberius; and the author of the *Divorce satyrique* gives many unedifying details of the debauchery of which he declares it to have been the theatre.[5]

Both sides have, of course, travestied the truth. The Marguerite de Valois of Usson was probably neither

[1] *Éloges des hommes et dames illustres.*

[2] *Histoire de Marguerite de Valois.*

[3] Jean d'Arnalt, *les Antiquités d'Agen* (Paris, 1606).

[4] Pierre Mathieu, *Histoire de France.*

[5] According to this scandalous chronicler, the Queen's favourites at Usson occupied, for the most part, somewhat lowly positions in the social scale: Pomini, a tenor from the cathedral at Clermont; Julien Date, the son of a carpenter at Arles, whom she ennobled, "*avec six aunes d'étoffe*," and who forthwith blossomed into Date de Saint-Julien (this young man met with a very tragic end, of which we shall have something to say hereafter); Résigade, a shepherd; Le Moyne, a *valet-de-chambre*; Comines, a strolling musician, and so forth.

better nor worse than the Marguerite de Valois of Paris and Nérac. A born coquette, to whom admiration was as the breath of life, she could never have existed without a train of admirers, and, as even her ardent apologist, M. de Saint-Poncy, admits that her Majesty was "*d'une complexion trop ardente pour ne pas céder a la tentation*," we shall probably be safe to assume that not all of them sighed in vain. On the other hand, the princess seems to have been throughout her life so strict an observer of the ritual of her Church, and had, moreover, so marked a predilection for literature and the arts, that a casual visitor to her mountain home, mindful of her stormy past, might well have fancied himself in the presence of a penitent, whose only pleasures, when not occupied with her devotions, were music, books, and the conversation of learned men, and departed with very much the same impressions which her panegyrists have formed.

Although Usson had little to commend it to a woman accustomed to the bustle and gaiety of Courts, Marguerite seems to have been happy enough, since, for the first time in her life, save for those mad months at Agen, when she had lived in constant dread of being attacked and dragged back to her husband, she found herself independent, and declared to one of her visitors that it was the "*château par excellence*." She seldom left its walls, but was far from remaining inactive, since she was in constant communication with the chiefs of the League in Auvergne: the Comte de Randan, Saint-Chamond, Saint-Vidal, and others, and is said to have been the soul of the resistance in that province. Several of them came to Usson to confer with its châtelaine, among them Honoré d'Urfé, the author of that sentimental romance,

Astrée, whom some writers have given a place in the list of the Queen's lovers, though, it would seem, without sufficient justification. His two brothers, Anne, Grand Bailiff of Forez, and Antoine, Bishop of Saint-Flour, were also among Marguerite's visitors, and the former dedicated to her his *Hymne de Sainte-Suzanne*, in which he calls her "*la Perle de France.*"

To Usson also came Loys Papon, Prior of Marcilly, who expresses his admiration for the Queen in a long poem, entitled *l'Hymne à très illustre princesse Marguerite de Valois, reine de France;* Joseph Scaliger, "the phœnix of learning," who speaks of her with enthusiasm as "liberal and learned, and possessed of more royal virtues than the King"; and, finally, Brantôme, who came to submit to Marguerite the eulogium which is found in his *Dames illustres*, and who seems to have first suggested to her the idea of writing her *Mémoires.*

These *Mémoires*, "*œuvres d'un après-dîner*," according to her own expression, are generally believed to have been written, at Usson, about 1595 or 1596; certainly not earlier than 1594, the date of her *éloge* by Brantôme, to correct and amplify certain statements in which was one of the writer's objects; nor later than 1597 or 1598, as is indicated by the comparison of various passages. (We have discussed elsewhere the question whether the *Mémoires* were continued beyond her departure for Paris in 1582.) So much has been written in their praise by historians and critics, from Pellisson, who tells us that he read them through from beginning to end twice in a single night, with the result that they converted him from a contemner into a passionate admirer of his mother tongue, and contributed more than any other work to

form his style, to Sainte-Beuve, who declares them to be "an epoch in the language, by reason of which an enduring radiance will attach to her name," that it would be almost superfluous for us to discuss them here. But we may be allowed to make one observation, which is, that the insinuation made by some writers, notably by Bayle and Villemain, namely, that the *Mémoires* are more pleasing than veracious, does Marguerite an injustice. A study of the writings of the best-informed of her contemporaries proves that, so far as regards historical facts, she is, in the main, singularly accurate; the pictures which she traces of the St. Bartholomew, the palace intrigues under Henri III., and the condition of Flanders are, as M. de Saint-Poncy very justly remarks, not less true than admirably drawn. As for those which chiefly concern herself, it is certainly true that since, as we have observed elsewhere, the *Mémoires* were intended, in great part, as an apology for the life of their author, Marguerite seeks to place the most favourable construction she is able on her actions; but, save in the case of one or two of her affairs of the heart, there seems to be no attempt to tamper with facts.

Marguerite's *Mémoires* were published, for the first time, in 1628, thirteen years after her death, by Auger de Mauléon—to whom we are also indebted for those of Villeroy and the letters of Cardinal d'Ossat—who committed the error of asserting that they were addressed to Charles de Vivonne, Baron de la Châteigneraie, Sieur de Hardelay, who had been chamberlain to the Duc d'Anjou.

Between 1628 and 1713, the work was several times reprinted, but without any alterations, until in the latter year, Jean Godefroy issued a new edition, printed at

Brussels, explaining that it was to Brantôme, and not to Charles de Vivonne, that the *Mémoires* were addressed and furnishing some useful biographical and historical notes. Godefroy's edition also included Marguerite's *éloge* by Brantôme, that of Bussy by the same writer, and Pierre Dampmartin's *Fortune de la Cour*. In the first half of the nineteenth century, three fresh editions appeared, the work being included in the collection of memoirs edited by Petitot and in that arranged by Michaud and Poujoulat. These reproduced many of the faults of those which preceded them; but the third edition, which was undertaken by M. Guessard on behalf of the Société de l'Histoire de France, and included a number of Marguerite's letters and the *Mémoire justicatif*, cleared away the old errors and was an excellent piece of work. Since then, two other editions have appeared, both enriched by notes, one edited by M. Ludovic Lalanne, the other by M. Caboche.

Maguerite's chief trouble at Usson seems to have been want of money, for, though nominally possessed of large revenues, the state of anarchy into which the country was plunged, made it very difficult for her agents to collect even a small part of them. According to Hilarion de Coste, the little Court was often exposed to want, and, in order to raise money, the Queen was obliged to pledge the rest of her jewels and to melt down her plate.[1] These sacrifices proving insufficient, she appealed to her sister-in-law, Elizabeth, widow of

[1] The troubles of the time often reduced the greatest personages to extreme want. In the winter of 1594, Henri of Navarre found himself without sufficient money to buy fodder for his horses, while his linen was reduced to five handkerchiefs and a dozen shirts, most of them torn! "I shall have to go on foot and naked," he remarked.

Charles IX., who possessed in France a rich dowry. This estimable princess, who, after the death of her husband, had retired to Austria, responded generously, and continued to assist Marguerite, until her death in January 1592.

Always lavishly generous, Marguerite, in spite of her financial troubles, disbursed large sums in charity, and, on this account, enjoyed great popularity among the peasantry of Auvergne. When she finally quitted Usson, in May 1605, her last thought was for the poor, and she signed a deed perpetuating the alms which she had been accustomed to distribute.

CHAPTER XXIII

Defeat of the League in Auvergne—Marguerite abandons the cause of the rebels and makes her peace with Henri IV.—Beginning of the negotiations for the dissolution of her marriage with Henri—Visit of Érard to Usson—Marguerite's letter to Duplessis-Mornay—Correspondence between the parties—Slow progress of the negotiations—Gabrielle d'Estrées—The King anxious to marry her, in spite of the impolicy of such a step—Marguerite unwilling to make way for "a woman of impure life"—Opposition of Clement VIII. to the divorce—Death of Gabrielle—Negotiations for the King's marriage to Marie de' Medici—The divorce is pronounced—Letters of Henri and Marguerite—The King's passion for Henriette d'Entragues raises new difficulties—Marriage of Henri IV. and Marie de' Medici.

From 1589 to 1592, Auvergne was a prey to all the horrors of civil war. The League, however, was the stronger party in the province, and, thanks to the good understanding which existed between Marguerite and its leaders, she remained undisturbed at Usson. During these years, the princess shared the hopes and fears of the rebels, was the confidante of their plans, and sent or, at any rate, permitted some of her servants, notably her seneschal at Clermont, Jacques d'Oradour, and her *chevalier d'honneur*, Jean de Lastic, to fight in their ranks. But on March 14, 1592—the same day which saw Henri of Navarre victorious in the plain of Ivry—the Leaguers of Auvergne were utterly routed at the

Battle of Cros-Rolland, near Issoire, and from that moment their fortunes rapidly declined, and the royal power was gradually re-established.

The King of Navarre's abjuration of Protestantism at Saint-Denis (July 25, 1592) deprived the League of the pretext which had been its main source of strength, and Marguerite lost no time in abandoning the sinking ship. When her husband was crowned at Chartres, she wrote to felicitate him on his accession, and henceforth devoted all the influence she possessed in Auvergne in favour of peace. "It is to the credit of the Valois princess," says her devoted admirer, M. de Saint-Poncy, "to have disengaged herself from the League, so soon as Catholic interests were safeguarded by the return of her husband to the Church of Rome, and to have comprehended the character of this great act of reconciliation, which gave satisfaction to two fundamental principles, to wit, hereditary monarchy and national religion." It certainly does infinite credit to the lady's intelligence that she should have so quickly comprehended how this great act of reconciliation was likely to affect her interests, and that she should have endeavoured to make her peace as speedily as possible with the husband with whose enemies she had so actively intrigued and against whose troops her servants had fought.

But the Béarnais was the last man in the world to bear malice, besides which, if he had much to forgive he had also much to be forgiven. Finally, he was becoming increasingly anxious to obtain his wife's consent to a step to which his advisers had been for some time urging him, and the political importance of which could scarcely be exaggerated.

It had long been evident that Henri's position would

be immensely strengthened if he were the father of legitimate children. The young Prince de Condé, the heir-presumptive to the throne, was a boy of feeble health and irresolute character, the legitimacy of whose birth was very much a matter of opinion. In the event of the King's early death, even should Condé's claims be undisputed, trouble would be certain to arise in regard to the Regency, since his mother, a woman of loose life, and strongly suspected of complicity in the murder of her husband, was obviously unfitted for such a post. On the other hand, a reconciliation between the King and Marguerite held out little or no hope of the heir so much desired; a woman on the threshold of her fortieth year can scarcely be expected to bear the children who have been denied to her vigorous youth. The only course, therefore, to consolidate the new dynasty and assure peace to the distracted kingdom, was for Henri to obtain a divorce from his unfruitful consort and marry again.

Duplessis-Mornay would appear to have been the first of the King's advisers to impress upon his master the duty of providing for an undisputed succession. One day, he happened to be representing to him "all the dangers that he ran in his frivolous attachments, and to which he exposed his soul and his reputation." "Why then, don't you think of marrying me?" remarked Henri. "Marry you!" exclaimed Mornay. "There is a double difficulty; we must first unmarry you. But if you are really in earnest—and I believe you are, since you know well enough the need there is for strengthening your State—I will venture, by your command, to undertake the affair." [1]

Mornay lost no time in approaching Érard, Mar-

[1] *Mémoires du Duplessis-Mornay.*

guerite's *maître des requêtes*, and, in the spring of 1593, despatched him to Usson, to ascertain his mistress's views on the subject. In exchange for the crown matrimonial, he was empowered to offer her a sum of 250,000 écus to pay her debts, which, by this time, amounted to an enormous sum, a pension of 12,000 écus and a residence suited to her rank, to be subsequently decided upon. In return, he was to request the Queen to give him a blank procuration, and to declare before a notary that she had been married without her consent, within the prohibited degrees, and without the papal dispensation. Mornay hoped that the King would have no need to have recourse to the Pope, and that the ecclesiastical and secular courts would be competent to pronounce a divorce.

Marguerite received her husband's proposals in very good part. She was growing somewhat weary of Usson and of a retirement which did not protect her from the importunities of her creditors, more clamorous than ever now that Elizabeth of Austria was dead, and she could no longer turn to her for assistance; and was well aware that, after so compromising a past, she could never hope to be Queen of France in anything but name. Moreover, by giving her consent to what was demanded of her, she would establish claims on her husband's gratitude, and would be able to pose for the remainder of her life as one who had sacrificed herself to the welfare of the State. She, therefore, decided that the very substantial advantages which the dissolution of her marriage promised her far outweighed the loss of dignity which she would thereby sustain, and wrote to Mornay the following letter:

THE QUEEN OF NAVARRE *to* DUPLESSIS-MORNAY.

April 1593.

"MONSIEUR DUPLESSIS,—Although I attribute only to the goodness of God and the kindly disposition of the King my husband, the honour which it has pleased him to do me, in assuring me of his favour, the possession in the world which I hold the most dear; being aware, nevertheless, how much the counsels of persons endowed with such ability and loyalty as yourself are able to accomplish with a great man who esteems and trusts them, as I know the King my husband does, I do not doubt that your good offices have been able to serve me. Wherefore I should have esteemed myself to be too ungrateful, were I not to thank you by this letter. The Sieur Érard will communicate everything to you. If you will oblige me by assisting in the carrying through of what has thus begun so well, on which depends all the repose and security of my life, you will place me under an immortal obligation, and I shall be very desirous of showing myself, by every means, your most affectionate and faithful friend." [1]

And to stimulate Mornay's zeal, and in proof of her gratitude, Marguerite sent him, some months later, a present of 14,000 livres.

On his return, Érard had a conference with some of the King's Council, when it was decided that his Majesty ought to send his accommodating consort a letter of thanks; and this Henri, accordingly, did, informing her of "his extreme satisfaction at the resolution at which

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

she had arrived to do everything which depended upon her to assist in the furtherance of his affairs, "and promising to arrange "for the payment of her debts and pension as speedily as possible."

During the next eighteen months, Érard was continually travelling backwards and forwards between the King's camp and Usson, and a great deal of correspondence passed between the parties and their representatives, chiefly, it must be confessed, of a rather sordid character. In a letter dated November 10, 1593, we find Marguerite thanking her husband for confirming her in the possession of the property and privileges which she had enjoyed under the two previous reigns, and for the donation of the promised 250,000 écus for the payment of her debts. But, two days later, she writes to Mornay, demanding that the proposed pension of 12,000 écus should be increased to one of 14,000. "That means nothing to his Majesty," she writes, "but a good deal to me, who am left with such slender means. In surrendering all that I surrender, it will be almost impossible for me to maintain a suite in accordance with my rank."

In the autumn of 1594, she writes to the King, requesting to be confirmed in the possession of Usson. Henri IV., however, demurred, since he did not approve of feudal fortresses of this kind being in the hands of any one upon whose loyalty he could not implicitly rely; upon which his wife returns to the charge: "The King ought rather to trust me," she writes, "than those who desire to deprive me of it." Tired of war, his Majesty yielded, and was informed by Marguerite that "she considered this hermitage to have been built to serve her as an ark of safety."

Then, Henri did not always keep his promises; her

pension fell into arrears, and, in a letter of July 29, 1594, Marguerite reproaches him with having broken his word; while in another, dated November 8, she demands that in place of a part of her pension which had been assigned her on certain Crown property at Clermont, she should have a vacant office in the Parlement of Toulouse; by selling it, she says, she will, at any rate, be able to procure some resources. The King, in his answer, seeks to pacify her, pleading extenuating circumstances, attributing the delay to the troubles of the time rather than to any unwillingness on his part to discharge his obligations, and assuring her that he will "testify by his deeds the truth of his promises and words." In the same letter, he asks for the procuration, which the Queen had not yet sent; and Marguerite, in spite of her indignation, complied with the request, and sent it *en blanc*, as she had been desired to do.

Nevertheless, matters made but slow progress; the divorce, in fact, was subordinated to the reconciliation of the King of France with the Vatican. There had been some thought, at first, of invoking certain "Gallican liberties," in virtue of which the French bishops might be able to declare the marriage annulled. But, after his abjuration at Saint-Denis, Henri comprehending the danger of such an expedient, which exposed the legitimacy of a second marriage to the risk of being disputed, modified his plans. "Some authors," observes M. de Saint-Poncy, "have demanded why the King addressed himself to the ecclesiastical authority, instead of causing his marriage to be annulled by lay authority, in employing for the purpose either the Parlement or the States-General. The reason of this is very simple; it is that, except by abandoning orthodoxy, he could not

free himself from a religious tie, save by the religious power. On her side, Queen Marguerite felt herself unable to give her consent, except to a dissolution sanctioned by the Pope. Henri IV. had not only to reckon with this legitimate demand, but also with public opinion, which would have seen in a second marriage, contracted without the consent of Rome, only an illicit union. 'Reasons of State' as well as religious considerations obliged him to have recourse to the Court of Rome. For a King, whose authority was only partially established, to attempt to disperse with the pontifical authority would have been very dangerous, if not impracticable. Thus the first aim of a divorce without the intervention of the Holy See, being judged impossible, it was only after the absolution accorded by the Pope to his royal penitent, on September 16, 1595, that the negotiation was able to be effectively pursued." [1]

Notwithstanding that Clement VIII. had consented to remove the ban of excommunication launched against Henri ten years before, he showed himself anything but favourably disposed to the divorce. Although the marriage had been performed without a dispensation, this irregularity had been subsequently condoned by Gregory XIII., when he confirmed the marriage in the following October.[2] Clement was naturally reluctant to admit that his predecessor had acted beyond his powers, since to do so would be to create a dangerous precedent. Moreover, he perceived that, so long as the question remained unsettled, he possessed a hold over the King of France, which he might utilise to curtail the concessions which Henri desired to grant to the

[1] *Histoire de Marguerite de Valois*, ii. 353.

[2] See pp. 85 note and 112 *supra*.

Huguenots, and to strengthen the influence of the Holy See in France.

Nor was the reluctance of the Vatican the only obstacle to a settlement. Henri's most trusted advisers, Mornay and Sully, who had at first so strongly urged the divorce, no longer advocated it with their former enthusiasm, fearing that its only result would be to legitimate a love intrigue.

In 1590, *la belle* Corisande had been succeeded in the King's affections by a new mistress, who had gained over her royal lover an ascendency even greater than that which her predecessor had enjoyed. This was the celebrated Gabrielle d'Estrées, the "model mistress," one of the six daughters of Antoine d'Estrées, Grand Master of the Artillery, and of Françoise Babou de la Boudaisière. Both mother and daughter were notorious for their gallantries, and the girls and their brother were known as the "seven deadly sins." [1] Gabrielle had been presented to Henri by her lover, the Duc de Bellegarde, one of the King's favourites. His Majesty fell violently in love on the spot, and though the fair Gabrielle at first rejected his suit, and told him to his face that "she found him so ugly that she was unable to look at him," he made her such brilliant promises, including, of course, the customary offer of marriage, that she eventually relented. To save appearances, the King married his new enchantress to Nicole d'Amerval, Seigneur de Liancourt, a widower with fourteen children, who, however,

[1] In 1592, Gabrielle's mother left her husband and went to live with Yves d'Alègre, Governor of Issoire. But her conduct and that of her lover so exasperated the townspeople that, on the following New Year's Eve, they rose in revolt, stormed the governor's house, and murdered them both.

was not permitted to be her husband in anything but name. In 1593, she bore the King a son, baptized César, and, shortly afterwards, at Henri's instigation, began an action for nullity of marriage before the ecclesiastical courts, "*fondée sur l'incapacité conjugale de M. de Liancourt.*" Her suit was successful, and the child, who was the cause of these proceedings, was duly acknowledged and legitimated by his royal father, and created Duc de Vendôme.

After her emancipation, Gabrielle was successively created Marquise de Monceaux and Duchesse de Beaufort, and installed triumphantly as *maitresse en titre.* She bore the King another son, called Alexandre and also legitimated, and a daughter, Catherine Henriette, afterwards married to the Duc d'Elbœuf; and Henri's attachment to her grew stronger as time went on, though Bellegarde, at any rate, continued to be a not unfavoured rival. "Good-bye, sweetheart," writes the King to her, from Saint-Denis, on the evening before his abjuration; "come in good time to-morrow, for it seems to me a year since I saw you. A thousand kisses for the hands of my angel and the lips of my dear mistress." And again: "I am writing to you, my dear love, at the foot of your picture, which I worship, because it is meant for you, not because it is like you. I am a competent judge, since you are painted in all perfection in my soul, in my heart, and in my eyes."

The portraits of Gabrielle scarcely justify the extravagant terms in which her contemporaries celebrate her beauty; but she was undoubtedly a very pretty woman, with a dazzling complexion, golden hair, and blue eyes shaded by long lashes. Moreover, she was sweet-tempered, kind-hearted and affectionate, and probably

GABRIELLE D'ESTREÉS, DUCHESSE DE BEAUFORT

From an Engraving after a Drawing attributed to FRANÇOIS QUESNEL,
in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

sincerely attached to the King, notwithstanding her occasional infidelities. She used her influence with moderation and to the advantage of others rather than to their detriment, and conducted herself with such decorum that even austere Calvinists declared that her behaviour was " that of a wife rather than of a mistress."

At last, Henri began to entertain serious thoughts of marrying his Gabrielle, so soon as his inconvenient consort could be got rid of. Sully relates that at the time of the Peace of Vervins (May 2, 1598), the King one day drew him into a garden, and, after carefully closing the door, approached the delicate subject of his divorce and re-marriage. The Pope, he was assured by his Ambassador at Rome, and those about the Papal Court, was anxious to serve him in the matter of a divorce, and it therefore behoved him to find a wife without delay. He then proceeded to enumerate all the marriageable foreign princesses and French girls of high rank, to each and all of whom, however, he contrived to discover some fatal objection as a possible Queen.

" Ah well, Sire," said Sully, " cause all the most beautiful girls in France from seventeen to twenty-five to be brought together ; converse with them, study their hearts, study their minds, and finally place yourself in the hands of matrons of experience in such matters."

The King laughed, and accused his Minister of jesting at his expense. " What would people say of such an assembly of girls ? " he remarked. " But be sure that the wife I seek must, above all, be a sweet-tempered woman, of good appearance, and likely to bear me children. Do you know of one who unites all these qualities ? " The cautious Sully replied that he had not considered the matter. " Well ! what will you

say if I name her in whom I have found them all?" cried the King. "That could not be, unless in the case of a widow," rejoined the Minister. "Ah! big fool that you are, confess that all the conditions I desire I find in my mistress!" exclaimed Henri.

Towards the end of 1598, it was generally known that the King, in spite of the strenuous opposition of Sully and Mornay, intended to marry the Duchesse de Beaufort. Such a resolution aroused universal alarm. Gabrielle had many friends and few enemies, but not even her most devoted partisans could maintain that her birth and previous life fitted her to be the Queen of France; while it was obvious that the opposing claims of her legitimated sons, and of those who might be born in wedlock, would add another element of discord to those already existing. But it was necessary for Marguerite to sign a new procuration, for the old one was no longer valid. The King, accordingly, despatched to Usson, Martin Langlois, a confidant of the Queen, whom she had nominated as one of her procurators in 1594. The favours heaped on the head of Gabrielle, however, had irritated Marguerite, who had already, it appears, hinted that she was but little inclined to make way for a mistress, for Langlois carried with him a letter from Henri IV. "I always believed," he wrote, "that you would by no means fail me in what you promised, and that you would not alter the resolution at which you had arrived. On my part, I shall not fail in anything which I have promised you."

Notwithstanding this letter, Langlois experienced great difficulty in persuading Marguerite to do what was required of her. "It is repugnant to me," said she, "to put in my place a woman of such low extraction

and of so impure a life as the one about whom rumour speaks."[1] However, on February 7, 1599, she at length consented to sign the procuration, and, by a singular caprice, desired that it should contain a declaration that her marriage had never been consummated; but on this she was, after some difficulty, induced not to insist.

So soon as the procuration was signed, Henri IV. despatched an envoy to Rome; but Clement VIII. disapproved of his Majesty's choice, less probably on account of Gabrielle's obvious unsuitability to share a throne as because she was the intimate friend of the King's sister Catherine, now Duchesse de Bar, and also of Louise de Coligny, Téligny's widow, who had married *en secondes noces* William the Silent, Prince of Orange. These two ladies were among the most stubborn heretics in Europe, and his Holiness did not doubt that, urged by them, Gabrielle would use all her influence with the King in favour of their co-religionists. He, therefore, still refused to dissolve the marriage, sheltering himself behind the difficulties regarding the succession in which such a marriage must involve France.

This paternal solicitude for his kingdom did not deceive Henri IV., who, impatient at the delay, instructed his representatives at the Vatican to hint that, if the Holy Father continued contumacious, the Eldest Son of the

[1] But she had, nevertheless, condescended to ask favours of "the woman of impure life" and to regard her as a sister. "I speak to you freely," she writes to Gabrielle, on February 24, 1597, "as to one whom I wish to keep as a sister. I have placed so much confidence in the assurance that you have given me that you love me, that I do not desire to have any protector but you near the King; for nothing that comes from your beautiful mouth can fail to be well received." She had also, shortly before Langlois's visit, transferred to Gabrielle her duchy of Étampes.

Church might be tempted to behave in an exceedingly unfilial manner, and follow the example of his last namesake on the throne of England. Whether, with this threat hanging over him, Clement would eventually have yielded is a matter of opinion ; but an unexpected event came to relieve the tension.

At the beginning of April 1599, the Duchesse de Beaufort, who was *enceinte* for the fourth time, left Fontainebleau, where the Court then was, to spend Easter in Paris. She lodged at the Deanery of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, with her aunt, Madame de Sourdes, but on the 6th supped at the house of an Italian financier, named Zamet, who had risen from a very humble station to great wealth. The next day, she attended the *Tenebræ* at the Couvent du Petit Saint-Antoine, then renowned for its fine music. During the service, she was taken ill, and was carried to Zamet's house, which was close to the convent, where she recovered sufficiently to return home. Next day, although still feeling unwell, she attended Mass at Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois. Here, however, she was again taken ill, and on returning to her relative 's house, fell into violent convulsions. On the 9th, she gave birth to a still-born child, after which the surgeons, who attended her, proceeded to bleed the unfortunate woman four times ! The consequence was that poor Gabrielle died the following morning (April 10); the only wonder is that she did not die before ! The public, learning that she had taken ill shortly after supping with Zamet, persisted in the belief that she had been poisoned—Italians bore a sinister reputation in those days, and, indeed, down to a very much later period—but this theory is now generally discredited.

The King was prostrated with grief at the loss of his

mistress. "My affliction," he wrote to his sister Catherine, "is incomparable, like the subject which is the cause of it. Regrets and tears will accompany me to the tomb. The root of my love is dead, and will never put forth another branch." However, as we shall presently see, he was not long in finding consolation.

When with Gabrielle had disappeared the great obstacle to a divorce, petitions poured in from all parts of the kingdom, begging the King to marry again. Deputations from the Parlements, the municipal bodies, and the religious corporations waited upon his Majesty to present addresses, in which were pointed out the advantages of a new union, which might procure him successors, and thus assure the tranquillity of the realm. While Henri's representatives at Rome redoubled their efforts to induce Clement VIII. to annul his marriage with Marguerite, his Ministers, undeterred by the many evils of which a Florentine marriage had before been the cause, opened negotiations with the Grand Duke of Tuscany for the hand of his niece, Marie, daughter of his brother and predecessor, Francisco de' Medici. Marie de' Medici was twenty-five, with a sufficiency of good looks to satisfy a not too exacting husband, and the prospect of a rich dowry. Moreover, she was the niece of the Pope, a circumstance which would doubtless induce his Holiness to expedite the divorce.

Matters, for a time, went smoothly. On July 29, 1599, Marguerite ratified the procuration of the previous February, and nominated as her procurators, Martin Langlois and Edouard Molé, councillor to the Parlement. She further declared that, for reasons already known, she neither believed that she had contracted a

valid marriage, nor regarded the King as her husband; that, moreover, she was no longer young enough to give him successors, and begged his permission to address herself to the Pope and to other ecclesiastical judges to cause their union to be annulled. This document was at once despatched to Rome, and, on September 24, Clement, having no longer to fear the influence of Gabrielle d'Estrées and her Huguenot friends, delegated the Cardinal de Joyeuse, the Bishop of Modena—the Papal Nuncio at the French Court—and Horace Montan, Archbishop of Arles, "to inquire into the affair."

On October 15, the inquiry was opened at the Louvre, in the presence of La Guesle, the *procureur-général*, and the two procurators appointed by the Queen, when Henri IV. was interrogated. Marguerite, at her own request, was examined at Usson, not by the commissioners, but by Berthier, the syndic of the clergy. "Never," said she to him, "did I consent willingly to this marriage. I was forced into it by King Charles IX. and the Queen my mother. I besought them with copious tears; but the King threatened me, that if I did not consent, I should be the most unhappy woman in his realm. Although I had never been able to entertain any affection for the King of Navarre, and said and repeated that it was my desire to wed another prince, I was compelled to obey." And she added, "To my profound regret, conjugal affection did not exist between us during the seven months which preceded my husband's flight in 1575; although we occupied the same couch, we never spoke to one another."[1]

If we are to believe the historian Dupleix, a writer, however, very hostile to Marguerite, Henri IV., on

[1] Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Français, published by La Ferrière.

receiving the report of his wife's interrogatory from Berthier, was unable to restrain his tears. "Ah! the wretched woman," cried he, "she knows well that I have always loved and honoured her, and that she cared nothing for me, and that her bad behaviour has for a long time been the cause of our separation." [1]

On November 10, 1599, the Papal commissioners declared the marriage of Henri and Marguerite null and void, *de facto et de jure;* on December 17, the dissolution was confirmed by the Parlement, on account of blood relationship, "spiritual affinity," [2] violence, and the failure of one of the parties to consent to it, and on the 22nd, the decree was proclaimed "solemnly and publicly," with open doors, in the Church of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois.

On the day following the confirmation of the divorce by the Parlement, Henri IV. despatched the Comte de Beaumont to Usson to announce the fact to Marguerite, and to hand her the following letter:

Henri IV. *to* Marguerite.

"My Sister,—The persons delegated by our very holy father to decide upon the nullity of our marriage, having at length pronounced their decision to our common desire and satisfaction, I did not wish to defer longer visiting you on such an occasion, both to inform you of it on my part, and to renew the assurances of my affection for you. Meanwhile, I am sending to you

1 *Histoire de Henri IV.*, p. 384.

2 Henri II.'s, Marguerite's father, had stood godfather to Henri of Navarre, in 1554. The argument was that this spiritual affinity had required a special Papal dispensation, and that that sent by Gregory XIII., in October 1572, only applied to the blood relationship.

the Sire de Beaumont expressly to perform this service, whom I have commanded to tell you, my sister, that if God has permitted the tie of our union to be dissolved, His divine justice has done it as much for our private repose as for the public welfare of the realm. I desire you also to believe that I do not intend to cherish and love you the less, on account of what has taken place, than I did heretofore; but, on the contrary, that I intend to exercise more solicitude than ever in regard to everything which concerns you, and to make you recognise, on all occasions, that I do not intend to be henceforth your brother merely in name, but also in deed. . . . Further, I am very satisfied with the frankness and candour of your prudence, and I trust that God will bless the rest of our days, by a fraternal friendship accompanied by a public felicity, which will render them very happy. Console yourself then, I beg you, my sister, in the expectation of both, with the assurance that I give you of contributing on my side everything which you have the right to expect, and which will be in the power of your affectionate brother."

To which letter Marguerite replied:

MARGUERITE *to* HENRI IV.

"MONSEIGNEUR,—Your Majesty, in imitation of the gods, does not rest content with overwhelming his creatures with benefits and favours, but designs further to consider and console them in their affliction. This honour, which is the proof of his benevolence, is so great that it cannot be equalled, except by the infinite willingness wherewith I have devoted myself to his service. I do not require, on this occasion, less consolation, for,

although it may be easy to console oneself for the loss of some of Fortune's benefits, respect alone for the merit of a King so perfect and so valorous must deprive one of all consolation ; and it is the mark of the generosity of a noble soul to preserve an eternal regret, such as would be mine, were it not that the happiness which it pleases him to make me feel, in assuring me of his favour and protection, did not banish it, to transform my complaining into praise of his goodness, and of the favours which it pleases him to confer upon me, wherewith your Majesty will never honour any one who acknowledges them with so much reverence, by the very humble and very faithful services, which render me worthy to be deemed by your Majesty his very humble and affectionate servant, sister, and subject."

By letters patent, dated December 29, 1599, Henri IV. preserved to Marguerite the title of Queen and Duchesse de Valois, and confirmed her and her successors in the enjoyment of the domains of the Agenais, Condomois, and Rouergue, and, in short, in all the lands that constituted her dowry and the donations of 1582.

The King was divorced, but he was not yet re-married. While his Ministers were haggling with the Duke of Tuscany over the price at which their master should sell his hand, his Majesty had once more lost the heart which he had fondly imagined was buried in poor Gabrielle's grave. Scarcely two months after his mistress's death, his love—to borrow his own expression—had " put forth another branch," and one that threatened to bear fruit of a most embarrassing kind.

On his way from Fontainebleau to Blois, in June 1599,

Henri had broken his journey at the Château of Malesherbes, where resided François de Balzac d'Entragues, Governor of Orléans, who had married Marie Touchet, the mistress of Charles IX., and the mother of Charles de Valois, Comte d'Angoulême, to whom Catherine de' Medici had bequeathed her county of Auvergne, to the exclusion of Marguerite. By her marriage with d'Entragues, Marie had three children, of whom one, a daughter, named Henriette, made so great an impression on the quasi-widower that he was quite unable to tear himself away, and when at length he quitted Malesherbes, it was to accompany his new charmer and her mother to Paris.

Henriette was not strictly beautiful; but she was witty, vivacious, and charming. Though but eighteen, she was very much alive to her own interests, and, counselled by her parents, determined that the brilliant destiny of which death had deprived her predecessor in the royal affections should be hers. The enamoured monarch loaded her with costly gifts, and employed every argument he could think of to overcome her resistance; but the lady was adamant, until, in despair, he placed in her hands the following remarkable document:

"We, Henri, by the Grace of God, King of France and Navarre, promise and swear before God and by our faith and kingly word to Monsieur François de Balzac, Sieur d'Entragues, &c. &c., that he, giving us to be our consort (*pour compagne*) demoiselle Henriette Catherine de Balzac, his daughter, provided that within six months from the present date she become pregnant and bear us a son, that forthwith we will take her to wife and publicly marry her in the face of Holy Church, in accordance with the solemnities required in such cases."

The document given to Henriette was not the original copy. That had been submitted by the King to Sully, who promptly tore it up before his Majesty's eyes. "I think you must be mad!" exclaimed Henri, astonished at such boldness. "Would to God, Sire, I was the only madman in France!" exclaimed the privileged Minister. He then proceeded to give his master some very wholesome advice, to which Henri listened somewhat crestfallen. However, it had no effect, for, the moment Sully had finished, the King gathered up the torn pieces of paper and retired to his cabinet to draw up a fresh promise, which he duly handed to his enchantress, who carried it about in her pocket, and triumphantly exhibited it to all her friends.

Once more, however, the unexpected came to save the situation. One night, the room in which the sultana —now become Marquise de Verneuil—lay was struck by lightning. The shock caused a miscarriage, and the King, holding himself released from his promise, thereupon decided to formally demand the hand of Marie de' Medici. On October 6, 1600, Bellegarde, acting as proxy for his master, married her at Florence; at the beginning of the following December, she arrived in France, and on September 27, 1601, gave birth to the much desired Dauphin, the future Louis XIII.

CHAPTER XXIV

Last years of Marguerite at Usson—Conspiracy of the Comte d'Auvergne and the d'Entragues—Marguerite commences a lawsuit against the count, over the estates bequeathed to him by Catherine—She leaves Usson to take up her residence at the Château of Madrid, at Boulogne-sur-Seine—Her arrival in Paris—Interview with the King at the Château of Madrid —She receives a visit from the Dauphin—Her reception by their Majesties at the Louvre—Her relations with the royal family—She takes up her residence at the Hôtel de Sens—Assassination of her favourite, Saint-Julien—She removes to Issy, gains her lawsuit, and builds a magnificent hôtel in the Faubourg Saint-Germain—Her patronage of men-of-letters—She organises fêtes for Marie de' Medici—Her toilettes criticised from the pulpit—Her favourite, Bajaumont—Her charity—Her benefactions to the Augustines—Coronation of Marie de' Medici—Assassination of Henri IV. by Ravaillac —Marguerite's discreet conduct during the Regency—Splendid ball given by her in August 1612—Her last years and death —Her character variously estimated.

For nearly five years after her divorce from Henri IV., Marguerite remained at Usson, although the King had given her permission to reside where she pleased, with the exception of Paris and its environs, doubtless being of opinion that, both for political and domestic reasons, it might be as well if his discarded consort did not appear in the capital, at least for some time to come. During these years, she and Henri corresponded frequently, and always in affectionate terms, addressing one another as brother and sister. There were, however, occasional

little misunderstandings on financial matters, and Marguerite was highly indignant when Aiguillon was erected into a duchy, for the benefit of the Duc de Mayenne, and to the prejudice of her own rights as Comtesse d'Agenais. "To my superior, to whom I owe everything, I have surrendered everything," she writes. "To my inferiors, to whom I owe nothing, I surrender nothing." In consequence of her protests, a compromise was effected; Aiguillon remained a duchy, but the princess retained all the rights and privileges she had formerly possessed there.

As the years went by, Marguerite began to grow weary of her mountain château, whose isolation, so great an advantage during the turmoil of the civil wars, now appeared to her in quite another light, and to cast about her for a pretext for returning to Paris and the gay world from which she had been so long separated. Nor had she far to seek. Implicated in the conspiracy of Biron,[1] the cowardly and cunning Charles de Valois, Comte d'Angoulême, who, since Catherine's bequest, had assumed the title of Comte d'Auvergne, had been pardoned, but, two years later, he, together with his stepfather, d'Entragues, and his half-sister, Madame de Verneuil, were actively intriguing with Spain. All three were arrested (June 1604), and a voluminous correspondence between the conspirators and the Court of Madrid discovered, containing proposals for the assassination of Henri IV. and a promise signed by Philip III. to recognise Henriette's son as heir to the French throne, in the event of the King's death. To save his life,

[1] Charles de Gontaut, son of the old marshal who had blockaded Nérac during the "Lovers' War." He was beheaded in front of the Bastille, July 31, 1602.

d'Entragues surrendered the famous promise of marriage which Henri IV. had given his daughter five years before, and, though found guilty of high treason, he was released, as was Henriette, while the Comte d'Auvergne was sent to the Bastille, where he remained eleven years.

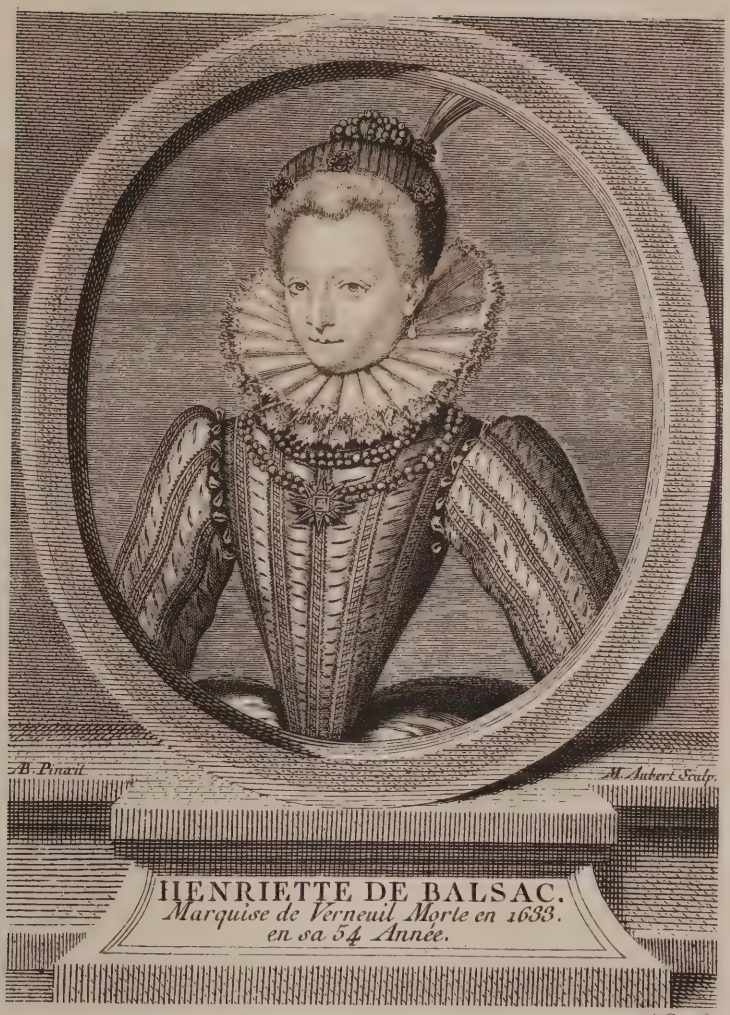
Marguerite, who had conceived a not unnatural antipathy to the nephew who had supplanted her, had watched that gentleman's proceedings in Auvergne very closely, and, as early as March 1600, had written to the King, warning him to be on his guard against him. She now seized the occasion of his disgrace to beg Henri's permission to lay claim before the Parlement of Paris to the estates which Catherine had bequeathed him. Catherine, it appeared, had really had no power to alienate her property from her family, since one of the clauses of her marriage-contract stipulated that, on her death, her estates should pass to her sons, and, in default of sons, to her daughters. The King authorised Marguerite to plead, and, in return, she promised that, if successful, she would bequeath the property to the Dauphin.

Under the pretext of being near at hand during the progress of her suit, she next sought Henri's permission to leave Usson and take up her residence at the Château of Madrid, at Boulogne-sur-Seine.[1] This request was also granted, the more readily, since she had warned the King that she was in possession of some important information affecting the welfare of the State. As a matter of fact, Marguerite, with a skill and persistency not unworthy of her mother, had contrived to penetrate

[1] The Château of Madrid was a residence of the Valois family situated on the banks of the Seine, on the borders of the Bois de Boulogne. It had been built by François I., from designs by Bernard de Palissy, on the King's release from his captivity in Spain. Hence its name.

HENRIETTE DE BALZAC D'ENTRAGUES,
MARQUISE DE VERNEUIL

From an Engraving by AUBERT


B. Pinxit
M. Aubert Sculp.
HENRIETTE DE BALSAC.
Marquise de Verneuil Morte en 1633.
en sa 54 Année.

the designs of her old admirer, Turenne, now Duc de Bouillon, whose conspiracy was the continuation of those of Biron and the Comte d'Auvergne.

The princess quitted Usson, which had been her home for nearly twenty years, at the beginning of July 1605, escorted to the boundary of the province by nearly all the chief nobles of Auvergne. At Cercottes, near Orléans, she was met by Sully, on his way to preside over a Huguenot assembly which was about to meet at Châtellerault. Marguerite acquainted him with what she had learned concerning Bouillon's intrigues; but the Minister appears to have been somewhat incredulous, and wrote to the King that what she had told him "contained as much falseness as truth."[1] However, the princess's information was confirmed from other quarters, and Henri lost no time in taking energetic measures against Bouillon, who was forced to sue for pardon.

The King, still somewhat uneasy as to the effect of the return of his first wife to the capital, would have preferred if she had stopped at Chenonceaux and there taken up her residence, in which case he expressed his willingness to purchase it from the Duchesse de Mercœur, to whom the château belonged.[2] But Marguerite had set her heart on Boulogne; and, after the proofs of her zeal for his service which she had just given, Henri felt that it would be ungracious to refuse her, and determined to give her a reception worthy of her rank. On her arrival at Longjumeau, on July 15, she was met by Diane de France, natural daughter of Henri II. and

[1] Sully, *Œconomies royales.*

[2] Chenonceaux had been bequeathed by Catherine to Henri III.'s Queen, Louise de Vaudémont, who bestowed it on the Duc de Vendôme, but it had lately passed into the possession of the Duchesse de Mercœur.

Philippe des Ducs, and widow *en secondes noces* of François, Maréchal de Montmorency, who accompanied her as far as the Faubourg Saint-Jacques. In crossing from the left to the right bank of the Seine, the Queen appears to have been much struck by the improvements which had been executed in Paris since that August day, twenty-two years since, when she had quitted it in such an agony of shame, at the bidding of her malevolent brother. What a change had taken place in the fortunes of her family since then! Henri, Anjou, and Catherine were dead; a new dynasty dwelt in the palace of her ancestors, and she re-entered Paris as the last legitimate representative of the once great House of Valois!

A link with the past awaited her on the steps of the Château of Madrid. It was none other than her old lover, Harlay de Chanvallon, who had come with the young Duc de Vendôme, Henri IV.'s eldest son by Gabrielle d'Estrées, and the Seigneurs de Roquelaure et de Châteauvieux, Marie de' Medici's *chevalier d'honneur*, to bid her welcome in the name of their Majesties. Dupleix declares that the presence of Chanvallon, "*lequel elle avoit autrefois plus aimé qu' elle ne devoit*," coupled with that of a natural son of the King, was not considered in good taste. But, however that may be, Marguerite seems to have been very pleased with her reception, and the following day wrote a very flattering letter to Henri IV., thanking him for his attentions, and expressing herself greatly delighted with M. de Vendôme. "It is easy to see," she writes, "that he is of royal birth, since he is as beautiful in person as he is in advance of his age in intelligence. I believe that God has given him to your Majesty, in order that you may receive from him some great service and satisfaction. I was never

more enchanted than whilst admiring this marvel of childhood, so full of wisdom and of serious conversation. In truth, this royal creation is worthy of your Majesty, who never produces anything, either animate or inanimate, which is not out of the common way." [1]

A week later, Henri IV. himself came to visit the princess. "If," remarks M. de la Ferrière, "he had not expected to see Marguerite again, he would have been able to ask the same question as that Russian diplomatist, the Baron de M . . . who, separated from his baroness, who had resided in Paris for more than twenty years, and seeing her enter a drawing-room in St. Petersburg, whispered to the lady of the house: 'Who is that fat old woman?' 'That is your wife,' was the smiling reply."

Time, indeed, had dealt hardly with Marguerite de Valois. When she had parted from her husband at Nérac, in March 1585, she had been still almost in the zenith of her beauty; now when they met again, after their long separation, she was in her fifty-third year, and nothing was left of the charms which had captivated so many hearts, save her magnificent eyes, which still sparkled with all their old-time vivacity. In place of her abundant locks, dark as the raven's wing, which she had prematurely lost, she wore an enormous coiffure of flaxen hair "half a foot higher than the coiffures then in vogue" As for her figure, once so slender and graceful, though Tallemant des Réaux is probably guilty of exaggeration when he describes her as "horribly stout," a portrait painted of her in the autumn of that same year, shows that she had developed a very decided tendency to *embonpoint*, while her features had become distinctly coarse.

The King, who had arrived at seven o'clock in the

[1] *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).

evening, remained until after ten L'Estoile reports that, before taking his leave, he made two requests of his "sister": the first, that, for the sake of her health, she should cease turning night into day, and day into night; the second, that she should place some bounds to her liberality and be a little less lavish in her expenditure. To which the princess replied that, at her age, it was difficult to change her habits, and that her generous instincts were inherited, and that it was impossible for her not to yield to them.

Marguerite, having expressed herself very anxious to see the Dauphin, the King sent him to visit her on August 6. She was taking the air in her litter on the Rueil road when the little prince appeared in Marie de' Medici's coach. On perceiving the Queen's litter, he alighted, while Marguerite did the same. When they were a few paces from one another, the Dauphin raised his hat, and exclaimed: "*Vous soyez la bien venue, maman ma fille!*" by which title he had been instructed to address her. Then, hastening forward, he embraced her, and Marguerite, in returning his kiss, said: "How handsome you are! You have certainly the royal air of commanding, as you will do one day." On the morrow, Madame de Lansac, her *dame d'honneur*, brought to the Dauphin, from her mistress, a little figure of a Cupid, with diamond eyes, seated on a dolphin made of emeralds, and a little scimitar, the hilt of which was studded with jewels. She offered, at the same time, to Henri's little daughter Élisabeth (afterwards Queen of Spain), a head-band of diamonds, and a gilded vase and basin to the Dauphin's nurse.[1]

On August 28, Marguerite was received by their

[1] *Journal de J. Héroard.*

Majesties, at the Louvre, in the midst of a crowd of curious courtiers. Henri IV. advanced to the centre of the courtyard to meet his ex-consort, and led her by the hand to present her to Marie de' Medici, who had remained at the foot of the grand staircase. Regarding, as she did, her predecessor with far from a friendly eye, the Queen had declined to advance any further, although the King had reminded her sharply that to a princess of Marguerite's illustrious birth the very highest honours were due.

The meeting between these two women invested with the same title, must have been decidedly piquant, and provoked inevitable comparisons. These, it would appear, were altogether to Marguerite's advantage, for while the Medici seemed confused and ill at ease, the Valois princess exhibited the perfect dignity and charming courtesy which were naturally hers ; and public sympathy was almost entirely on her side.

Henri IV., as we have mentioned, had been somewhat doubtful as to the wisdom of permitting Marguerite to return to the capital, but none of his fears were realised. On the contrary, far from seeking to foment discord, the princess came with an olive branch in her hand, and it was largely due to her influence that several of the old nobility who had hitherto held aloof from the new dynasty became reconciled to it.

Shortly after her reception at the Louvre, the King invited Marguerite to spend some days with the Royal Family at Saint-Germain. She accepted, and a friendly intimacy was quickly established between her and the new *ménage*. Now that they were no longer husband and wife, Henri and Marguerite were the best of friends, and the King, who had always entertained a very high

opinion of the princess's intelligence, would seem to have consulted her frequently on important matters. Marie de' Medici, too, finding that she had nothing to fear from the woman she had supplanted, yielded to the charm of Marguerite's society, and Héroard relates, in his *Journal*, that one morning he saw the ex-Queen on her knees beside her successor's bed, on which sat Henri IV. with the Dauphin, who was playing with a little dog.

The Princes of the Blood, the Ambassadors of all the Powers, and the great nobles came to the Bois de Boulogne to pay homage to the princess; but Marguerite soon grew tired of the Château of Madrid, and, profiting by the amicable relations she had established with the King and Queen, demanded and obtained permission to take up her residence in Paris itself. In December 1605, she rented the Hôtel de Sens,[1] situated in the Rue du Figuier, at the corner of the Rue de la Mortellerie, where she surrounded herself with a little Court of poets, musicians, savants, and theologians.

But here, too, her sojourn was but a brief one; for,

1 This hôtel, which had been built, in 1475, by Tristan de Salzagar, and enlarged, under Francois I., by Cardinal du Prat, was the official residence of the Archbishop of Sens, Metropolitan of Paris, until Paris was made an archbishopric in 1622. At this period, it was occupied by Renaud de Baune, Primate and Grand Almoner of France. L'Estoile tells us that the piquancy of a princess with so great a reputation for gallantry installing herself in an archbishop's palace did not escape the notice of the rhymesters of the day; and one fine morning, the following verses were found posted on the door:

"Comme reine tu devras être
En ta royale maison;
Comme putain, c'est bien raison
Qu tu loge au logis d'un prêtre."

in less than four months, a most tragic event decided her to quit the Hôtel de Sens.

Among the members of Marguerite's suite was a youth of some twenty summers, the son of one Date, a carpenter of Arles, who, as we have mentioned elsewhere, had, since entering her Majesty's service, blossomed into a Sieur de Saint-Julien. This Saint-Julien, if we are to believe the chroniclers of the time, was passionately beloved by his royal mistress,[1] though perhaps, as a charitable biographer suggests, her affection for him may have been "merely platonic and maternal." However that may be, he stood on the very pinnacle of favour, and was regarded with envy and hatred by his less fortunate colleagues. One of these rivals, Vermont by name, either because he was jealous of the privileges which Saint-Julien enjoyed or, more probably, because he believed that the favourite had used his influence with the Queen to procure the disgrace of certain members of his family, suspected of having aided the Comte d'Auvergne's intrigues, swore to be avenged. Nor was his vow an idle one, for, on the morning of April 5, 1606, at the very moment when Saint-Julien was assisting Marguerite to alight from her coach, on her return from hearing Mass at the Celestines, he stepped forward, and, levelling a pistol, shot him dead.

The assassin endeavoured to escape, but was pursued and overtaken near the Porte Saint-Denis. The bereaved princess, beside herself with rage and grief, vowed that she would neither eat nor drink until justice had been done, and forthwith wrote to the King the following letter :

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1 ". . . *Saint Julien, lequel ladite Roine aimoit passionément*," L'Estoile.

MARGUERITE *to* HENRI IV.

April 5, 1606.

"MONSEIGNEUR,—An assassination has just been committed, at the door of my hôtel, before my eyes, opposite my coach, by a son of Vermont, who has shot with a pistol one of my gentlemen named Saint-Julien. I beg your Majesty very humbly to order justice to be done, and not to be pleased to pardon him. If this crime is not punished, no one will be able to live in security. I beg your Majesty very humbly to be pleased that the assassin should be punished."

The King sent orders for Vermont to be brought to trial without an hour's delay; and he was condemned to death, and executed the following morning, in front of the Hôtel de Sens, "declaring aloud," writes L'Estoile, "that he cared not about dying, since he had accomplished his purpose."

From a window of her hôtel Marguerite witnessed the execution; but she had presumed too much upon her strength, and, being taken ill during the night, resolved to leave without delay the Hôtel de Sens, which, she felt, must henceforth hold for her such tragic memories. Accordingly, a day or two later, she removed from the Rue du Figuier to a house at Issy, belonging to a wealthy goldsmith named La Haye, pursued by the malicious verses in which the Parisians of those days took so much delight.

"La Reine Venus demi-morte
De voir mourir devant sa porte
Son Adonis, son cher amour
Pour vengeance a devant sa porte
Fait défaire en la même place
L'assassin presque au même jour."

Soon after the tragic end of Saint-Julien,[1] the princess gained her lawsuit against the Comte d'Auvergne, and was adjudged the rightful owner of the counties of Auvergne and Clermont, and the rest of the estates of Catherine. She at once executed a deed conveying them to the Dauphin, with the condition, however, that the estates in question should be reunited to the Crown, and should never again be alienated. She reserved the revenues to herself during her life-time, but, shortly afterwards, surrendered them, in return for a handsome pension.

This augmentation of her income enabled her to purchase the house at Issy, where she caused a good many improvements to be executed, and laid out some charming gardens. But, though she remained at Issy until late in the following winter, through fear of the plague, which was devastating Paris, she used it henceforth merely as a summer residence, and acquired on the left bank of the Seine, facing the Louvre, a large plot of land, part of which belonged to the University, and part to the "Frères de la Charité,"[2] where she proceeded to construct a magnificent hôtel. She also purchased part of the old Pré-aux-Clercs, the scene of so many duels, which she converted into an immense park, extending as far as what is now the Rue des Saints-Pères.

In this hôtel, which was finally completed in 1608, the old Queen spent the last years of her life, paying

[1] She commissioned the poet François Maynard to commemorate Saint-Julien's death in verses, wherein the ill-fated youth figures under the name of Damon.

[2] Founded by Jean de Dieu. They devoted themselves to ministering to the sick poor, and were skilled in surgery and medicine.

however, occasional visits to Issy, her château at Boulogne sur-Seine, and the royal residences around Paris. The friendship which she showed for men-of-letters, savants, and musicians, drew many of them around her, amongst whom may be mentioned François Maynard—whom she made her secretary—Porchères, Garnier, and the moralist Pilhard. It was her custom, Etienne Pasquier tells us, to invite three or four of her literary *protégés* to dinner or supper almost every day, propose to them some subject of discussion, and encourage each to state his views at length; she herself joining freely in the debate, as she delighted to show that her intellect had lost none of its keenness.[1] Her hôtel, however, resembled a Court far more than the residence of a private individual, for she always lived *en souveraine*, and abated nothing of the ceremonial to which she had been accustomed.

She does not seem to have regretted the place which she had ceded to another, and remained on the best of terms with Marie de' Medici. It was to her predecessor, who remembered the magnificent fêtes given by Catherine, that the new Queen had recourse when she intended to organise some particularly great reception. Thus her Majesty begged Marguerite's assistance when she wished to receive, according to the etiquette of the Valois Court, Don Pedro de Toledo, Constable of Castile and Ambassador of Philip III., and, in January 1609, we hear of a great Court reception being postponed for a week, owing to the illness of Queen Marguerite, "*l'organisatrice et la maîtresse véritable.*" When it took place, after a ball at the Arsenal, their Majesties adjourned to Marguerite's hôtel, where they were

[1] Etienne Pasquier, *Lettres*, ii. 761. M. Charles Merki, *La Reine Margot et la fin des Valois*, p. 421.

MARIE DE' MEDICI, QUEEN OF FRANCE

From the Painting by FRANZ POURBUS THE YOUNGER
(*by permission of* MRS. ALFRED MORRISON)

entertained to a superb "collation," which was said to have cost 4000 écus, and at which appeared three silver dishes, "one of which bore an orange-tree, another a lemon-tree, and a third a pomegranate-tree, so dexterously and cleverly imitated and disguised that no one could tell that they were not real plants."

The princess stood godmother to Henri's second son Gaston, Duc d'Orléans, and seems to have been much attached to the royal children, and, in particular to the Dauphin. Writing to Henri IV., during his absence from Paris, in May 1606, she informs him that she has had the honour of kissing the hand of Monsieur le Dauphin, and that he and *Mesdames* [the princesses] are growing in stature and beauty, especially the Dauphin, "who bears upon his countenance, and in all his royal actions, the true imprint of what he is."

Although her figure had become so unwieldy that, according to Tallemant des Réaux, "*il y avait bien des portes où elle ne pouvait passer*," she still desired to be young, and refused to renounce the toilettes of her youth; and such had once been her fame as a leader of the mode that she still found imitators. "To-day," writes L'Estoile, under date March 10, 1610, "the preacher at Notre-Dame, Suffren by name, a Jesuit, discoursing in his sermon on the dissoluteness and licentiousness of women, declared that there was not in all Paris one so little coquettish, that she did not show her bosom, following the example of Queen Marguerite." Then, as though desirous of taking back his words (which were judged for a man of intelligence, such as he was, to have been spoken with too little discretion), having paused for a moment, he went on to say, that he "had no intention to criticise Queen Marguerite, and that many things

were permissible for queens which were forbidden to others." [1]

And she still continued to have her favourites. The succession to the post of the defunct Saint-Julien was for some little time in dispute, but, at length, victory remained with a youth named Bajaumont. Marguerite, however, appears to have brought misfortune to those who basked in her smiles, and, like the *mignons* of Henri III., they nearly all met with premature and violent deaths: La Môle and d'Aubiac on the scaffold; Bussy, Guise, the hapless apothecary of Carlat, and Saint-Julien at the hands of the assassin; though in the case of Bussy and of Guise their tragic ends were, of course, unconnected with their intimacy with the Queen. The new favourite was more fortunate, but, nevertheless, had to defend his life with his sword against one Loué, the son of an advocate of Bordeaux, who, one day, made a murderous attack upon him in the Church of the Augustines. Fearful lest Bajaumont might share the fate of his predecessor in her affections, Marguerite caused his assailant to be arrested and shut up in For l'Évêque, to cool his blood. But soon death threatened Bajaumont in another form, and he fell dangerously ill. The old Queen was in despair, and Henri IV. came to comfort her. It would appear that his ex-consort had contrived to extract from him considerable sums for the construction of her hôtel, for when, on taking his departure, the King passed through a room where several of Marguerite's maids-of-honour were sitting, "he begged them all to pray for the convalescence of Bajaumont, and that he would give them New Year's gifts. 'For, if he were to die,' said he; '*ventre Saint-Gris!* it would cost me a great deal

[1] *Journal de Henri IV.*

more, since I should have to buy her [Marguerite] a new house, in place of this one, where she would never consent to remain.' " [1]

Bajaumont recovered, but, instead of being grateful for the solicitude of his royal mistress, would appear to have presumed on her favour, for, on May 10, 1607, we find Henri IV. writing to Marie de' Medici: "I have no news, save that yesterday Marguerite chastised Bajaumont, and that he intends to leave her." However, they were reconciled, and in September 1609, L'Estoile reports that Bajaumont had again been taken ill, but had recovered, "more owing to the kindness of his mistress than the skill of his doctor."

Notwithstanding these follies—they were probably nothing worse—Marguerite seems to have spent much of her time in serious reflection and devotion, while her charity was boundless. She dispensed large sums in founding and endowing hospitals, convents, churches, and colleges. Mathieu de Morgues estimates her gifts to the religious Orders at 120,000 livres a year, without counting her private alms, which she distributed with lavish hand, though with, it is to be feared, more generosity than discretion; "because," says Richelieu, "she preferred to give to an undeserving person than to fail to give to one who was deserving." [2] Each year she devoted a considerable sum to providing poor girls with the

1 L'Estoile, *Journal de Henri IV.* M. de Saint-Poncy is very angry with L'Estoile, whom he accuses of shamefully maligning his heroine; and there can be no doubt that the worthy diarist was rather prone to jot down picturesque anecdotes without troubling himself to verify them.

2 *Mémoires du Cardinal de Richelieu.*

indispensable *dot*, another to assisting struggling artists and men-of-letters, political refugees, and indigent foreigners. At Easter, on Ascension Day, on Whit-Sunday, at Christmas, and on her birthday (May 14), she distributed a hundred gold crowns and as many loaves of bread to a hundred poor persons. She supported entirely eleven hundred poor, and forty refugee Catholic priests from England, Scotland, and Ireland, and distributed money every day, at the gate of her hôtel, on her return from Mass; while each Holy Week she made a tour of the hospitals of Paris, and distributed between three and four thousand coverlets.[1]

Although all the religious Orders participated in her bounty, the Augustines were her favourites. In the park attached to her hôtel in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, she built a chapel for the *Augustins déchaussés*,[2] and employed the best artists of the time in the decoration of its interior. The first stone was laid by the princess on March 21, 1608, and in July 1610, she commenced building them a convent and a large church. But the *Augustins déchaussés* did not fulfil certain conditions which their benefactress had imposed upon them, so, early in the year 1613, Marguerite, having appealed to the Pope, ejected them, in spite of their protestations, and replaced them by the *Petits-Augustins*, though she did not live to see the completion of her work. The *Petits-Augustins* occupied their convent

[1] Comte Léo de Saint-Poncy, *Histoire de Marguerite de Valois*, ii. 511, *et seq.*

[2] There were at this period in Paris four Augustine convents, two on the right and two on the left bank of the Seine: the *Vieux Augustins*, on the Quai Saint-Eustache; the *Augustins déchaussés*, called the *Petits-Pères*; the *Grands Augustins* in the Quartier Saint-André des Arcs, and the *Petits Augustins*.

until the Revolution, when they were expelled. In 1820, the cloister, which had, in the meanwhile, been converted into a museum, was demolished. Its site is now occupied by the École des Beaux-Arts.

In the spring of 1610, the preparations for a general attack on the possessions of the House of Austria, which Henri IV. had so long been meditating, were completed. The King himself intended to take command of the army which was to operate on the Rhine, in conjunction with the Protestant princes of Germany and, on March 20, he signed an Ordinance appointing Marie de' Medici Regent of the kingdom during his absence. To add to the security and dignity of her position and make her claim to the Regency, in the event of her husband's death, more indisputable, Marie urged him to allow her to be crowned Queen of France. To this Henri consented, and the coronation took place at Saint-Denis, with great splendour, on May 13.

Marguerite was invited to assist at the ceremony. She would have preferred to absent herself, for it was difficult for her to view without some heartburnings the final triumph of the woman who had supplanted her. But Henri, being of opinion that her presence would be regarded, so to speak, as the consecration of the new dynasty, pressed her so hard that she finally consented to attend. Her dignity was, however, somewhat ruffled by the fact that, though she was permitted to wear a crown, her claim to a mantle entirely covered with *fleurs-de-lys*, similar to that worn by Marie de' Medici, was not allowed, and, still more, when Henri IV.'s little nine-year-old daughter Élisabeth was given precedence of her in the Queen's procession. Both princesses were attired as Daughters of France,

in bodices of cloth-of-silver, with tippets of ermine ornamented with jewels, and royal mantles of violet velvet lined with ermine and bordered by two rows of *fleurs-de-lys*. The train of Marguerite's magnificent mantle, which she subsequently presented to the Church of Saint-Sulpice, to form the daïs, which is raised above the Holy Sacrament on great occasions, was borne by the Comtes de Curson and de la Rochefoucauld.

That afternoon Marguerite proceeded to Issy, where, on the following day (May 14), she gave, according to her custom, a fête in honour of her birthday. Dupleix relates that, in the evening, he had been talking with the old Queen of the many great events which had taken place on the fourteenth day of the month, which had often been very favourable for France, citing the Battle of Agnodel, gained by Louis XII. over the Venetians (May 14, 1509); that of Marignano, won by François I. (September 14, 1515); that of Césirolles (April 14, 1544); the raising of the siege of Metz by Charles V. (January 14, 1553); and the victory of Ivry (March 14, 1590). A few minutes later, a messenger arrived with the news of the death of Henri IV., assassinated by Ravaillac, that afternoon, in the Rue de la Ferronerie.

Marguerite appears to have sincerely mourned her former consort. She was too intelligent not to have appreciated his great qualities, and the irreparable loss which France had sustained by his death; too generous-hearted not to have long since forgiven him his conjugal failings; and indeed, since the divorce, Henri seems to have treated her with unvarying kindness. "The same day [May 22, 1610]," writes L'Estoile, "Queen Marguerite caused a beautiful service to be sung at the

Augustines, for the repose of the soul of the deceased King, whose affectionate wife she had been for twenty-two years, and who voluntarily agreed, with the dispensation of the Pope, to the dissolution of the marriage, chiefly because the Lord had not blessed her with happy offspring, which was greatly desired by good Frenchmen."

Nor did she confine herself to regrets. She used every endeavour to obtain a fair hearing for a woman Comans, or d'Escomans, who had formerly been in her service, and who came to her, declaring that she had proofs that Ravaillac had been but the instrument of d'Epernon, Madame de Verneuil, and other highly-placed persons. But Marie de' Medici declined to credit the statements of Comans, who was brought to trial for slander and condemned to perpetual imprisonment as a lunatic.

Marguerite survived Henri IV. nearly five years. "Apart from the folly of love, she was very sensible," remarks Tallemant des Réaux; and just as she had always declined to take any part in the quarrels between the King's last mistresses, Madame de Verneuil and Jacqueline de Beuil, Comtesse de Moret, she held aloof from the acrimonious disputes which marked the first years of the Regency. She remained on the friendliest of terms with Marie de' Medici and the young King, and was a constant attendant at Court functions, where she was always treated with the utmost consideration. In her hôtel in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, she gave several magnificent fêtes, the most important of which was the grand ball which she gave on August 26, 1612, in honour of the Duke of Pastrana, son of Ruy Gomez and of the celebrated Princess of Eboli, when he came

to demand the hand of Élisabeth de France for the future Philip IV. of Spain.

The ball-room was encircled by steps "in the form of an amphitheatre," on which the ladies of the Court took their places; in the centre, under a daïs of cloth-of-gold, sat the young King, with the Queen-Mother on his right hand and Madame Élisabeth on his left. Close to the little princess sat Marguerite, a vision of splendour which must have dazzled all eyes, her ample person encased "in a robe of silver cloth, with long open sleeves, sewn all over with rose diamonds, as was also the front of her corsage"; strings of pearls and diamonds adorned her head-dress, and a flashing *rivière* encircled her neck.

According to custom, the ball began at half-past six in the evening, when Louis XIII. opened the proceedings by dancing a *branle* with his eldest sister. After one or two other distinguished couples had performed solemn evolutions before the respectful gaze of the assembly, the Duke of Pastrana approached the royal daïs, and, on bended knee, solicited the honour of treading a measure with his future Queen. Rigid Spanish etiquette forbade him to begin the dance, or to take her hand, so the princess had to precede him, and when they approached one another, the duke merely touched with the tips of his fingers the long hanging-sleeve of the royal dancer. At the conclusion of the ball, Marguerite entertained the distinguished company to a collation "*les raretés et les sumptuosités*" of which the chronicler describes in glowing terms.[1]

[1] *Le grand bal de la Reine Marguerite faict devant le Roy, la Reine, et Madame, le Dimanche, 26 Aoust, 1612.* A copy of this very rare little brochure is in the possession of the British Museum.

In these last years, the old Queen became exceedingly devout, and ended by hearing three Masses every day, one high and two low ones. Nevertheless, she continued her flirtations, and, in place of Bajaumont, who is believed to have died young, took into favour a young singer named Villars, who, Tallemant des Réaux tells us, was surnamed "*le Roi Margot.*" "She [Marguerite] brought Villars into the garden of the Tuileries, to allow the Queen to hear him sing," writes Malherbe to Pereisc, under date May 14, 1614.[1]

At the end of that same year, Marguerite attended the procession and opening of the States-General, when she contracted a severe chill, which she was unable to shake off. Early in March 1615, she was dangerously ill, and though, towards the end of the month, she was so much better that hopes were entertained of her ultimate recovery, this improvement was quickly followed by a relapse, and, on the 26th, her Grand Almoner, the Bishop of Grasse, warned her that her end was at hand. The following day, she signed a codicil in favour of her *protégés*, the Augustines, and at eleven o'clock that night, after having received the last Sacraments, "*avec la plus édifiante componction,*" she died, being within a few weeks of completing her sixty-second year.

"On March 27," writes Pontchartrain, "there died in Paris, Queen Marguerite, the sole survivor of the race of Valois; a princess full of kindness and good intentions for the welfare and repose of the State, and who was only her own enemy. She was deeply regretted."[2]

After lying in state in the Chapel of the Augustines,

[1] Cited by La Ferrière, *Trois Amoureuses au XVI^e siècle: Marguerite de Valois.*

[2] *Mémoires de Pontchartrain.*

her body was conveyed to Saint-Denis and interred in the superb mausoleum of the Valois, erected by Catherine de' Medici. The advocate, Louis Servin, who had successfully conducted her lawsuit against the Comte d'Auvergne, composed a lengthy Latin epitaph, which was engraved by the Augustines, to whom she had bequeathed her heart.

Her superb hôtel was sold on May 11, 1622, for the benefit of her creditors, for, though her charity was boundless, she seldom paid her debts, which were reported to exceed 200,000 écus. No trace of it now remains; but her house at Issy is still standing, and, increased by two wings, has become the *succursale* of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice.

"Never," says M. de la Ferrière, in his interesting study of Marguerite de Valois, "have more contradictory judgments been passed on the same woman. In the camp of the defence, all the great poets of the Renaissance, from Ronsard to Desportes, have chanted her praises; Brantôme has extolled her to the skies; the three brothers d'Urfé and Loys Papon are her passionate admirers; Hilarion de Coste, that enthusiastic panegyrist of the women of the sixteenth century, has made of her a victim and a saint; Bassompierre has energetically defended her against Dupleix, 'that dog which bit the hand that fed him.' In the camp of the attack, d'Aubigné, under the double pressure of religious and political passion, has dragged her in the mud;[1] Dupleix, an

1 M. de La Ferrière is evidently of opinion that d'Aubigné is the author of the *Divorce satyrique*, but this is by no means certain; and, though it is included in the *Œuvres complètes* of d'Aubigné, edited by Réaume and de Caussade, in 1877, the editors give it under all reserve.

ingrate; Bayle, a cold sceptic; Tallemant des Réaux, a recorder of licentious anecdotes; Mathieu, Mézeray, grave historians, have judged her severely. What are we to conclude? It is that history, readily indulgent towards women who have loyally and sincerely loved, is but little so for those whose lives have been mainly occupied with gallantry."

But was Marguerite really so "gallant" as her detractors assert, and as M. de la Ferrière seems to imagine? We are inclined to think, with her two most recent biographers, M. de Saint-Poncy and M. Merki, that her failings in this respect have been greatly exaggerated; and certainly the more discreditable of the intrigues laid to her charge rest on very unsatisfactory evidence; some passages from L'Estoile, a worthy man, but one of the most credulous of chroniclers, two or three anecdotes of Du Vair, Dupleix's *Histoire de France*, and the scurrilous *Divorce satyrique*.

Still, after allowance is made for all possible exaggeration, there can be little doubt that Marguerite is only too well entitled to be described as an "*amoureuse*"; but, at the same time, in justice to her, it should be borne in mind that never had woman better excuse for her irregularities. Brought up in one of the most licentious Courts the world has ever seen, married for "reasons of State" to a husband to whom she was not only indifferent, but who was utterly indifferent to her, who made not the slightest attempt to win her affection, but flaunted his innumerable gallantries before her eyes, and showed a cynical indelicacy in the demands that he made on her complacence, she would have been something more than human had she not yielded to the temptations which beset her, and, following the example of all the

other neglected wives she saw around her, sought companionship and affection elsewhere. To judge her by ordinary standards of morality would be not only unjust, but absurd.

But, apart from the irregularities of her life, the last of the Valois has many claims to our admiration and respect. She showed a most praiseworthy loyalty to her husband's interests under very difficult circumstances, and continued to do so, until the persecution to which she was subjected by her malevolent brother, and the scandals which followed, had changed his indifference and neglect into dislike and contempt. She was unselfishly devoted to her younger brother, Anjou, for whose sake, as we have seen, she readily braved persecution and disgrace at the Court and the risk of capture and imprisonment by the Spaniards in Flanders. She exhibited real magnanimity on her return to Paris in 1605, when, instead of seeking to embarrass the woman who had usurped the place which was rightfully hers and the husband who had discarded her, she lived on the friendliest terms with them, and used all her influence to reconcile the old nobility to the new dynasty. One of the most charming writers of her time, as her *Mémoires* and correspondence show, she was "the refuge of men-of-letters, and loved to hear them talk," and did all in her power to exalt their calling. But perhaps her best claim to our regard is her abounding charity. "True heiress of the House of Valois," says Richelieu, to whose calm and dispassionate judgment it is pleasant to turn after the almost hysterical panegyrics of Brantôme and Hilarion de Coste and the shameful calumnies of the *Divorce satyrique*, "she never made a gift to any one without excusing herself for giving so little, and the

present was never so large that there did not always remain to her a desire to give more. . . . In short, as charity is the queen of virtues, this great queen crowned hers by that of her alms, which she dispensed so abundantly that there was not a religious house in Paris which did not experience it, nor a poor person who had recourse to her without obtaining assistance. Moreover, God recompensed with usury that which she exercised towards His people, giving her the grace to make so Christian an end, that if she had been a subject to provoke envy among others during her life, one had the more cause to envy her at her death." [1]

Marguerite de Valois's brothers called her Margot, and by that name she is best known to history.

[1] *Mémoires du Cardinal de Richelieu.*

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